



Genesis 30 - Answers

The Lord God had given "boundaries", or "laws" to the people He created. These were not "suggestions" for happy living. No - these were Laws - written in stone - which, if disobeyed, would bring sorrow and death to the ones who disobeyed, and quite often also to the other people in their lives. These other people were "innocent victims" of the disobedience of the people in their lives.

The Lord God, foreseeing such sorrow and suffering coming upon innocent people, laid down a few more rules and guidelines to protect the innocent. The rules and guidelines seemed to say "You shouldn't do such and such, but if you do, here are a few more rules to tell you how to behave in the difficult situation you have created."

At first look, it might seem that the Lord God is saying: "I don't want you to do this, but I know you will, so I guess I've changed my mind - you can do it."

But that's not at all what the Lord God was saying. For instance:

God's Law said "One man, one woman, one flesh". Genesis 2:24. From the beginning the definition of marriage was: One man, one woman, one flesh. Multiple wives were not OK. Homosexual unions were not OK.

But God, knowing the rebellious hearts of men and women, put another law in place to protect the children born into marriages with more than one Mom. Deuteronomy 21:15-17 specifically protests the firstborn of a union between a man and the wife who is not his favorite.

Divorce also falls into this category. God hates divorce. But He put a "certificate of divorce" (Deut 24:1-4) into place in the days of Moses because He knew that divorce, though terrible, would definitely happen, and there would be innocent people to protect. See Matthew 19:3-9. When God

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allowed a "certificate of divorce" was He saying divorce was OK? Nope. He was saying the innocent parties should have some protection.

So, here in Chapter 30, we see a situation where multiple wives will be producing multiple children. We know without being told that there will be much strife and unfairness as a result.

The Lord God actively worked in these lives - both the innocent and the guilty - protecting and helping and teaching - not because He all of a sudden thought multiple wives was OK, but because He was protecting the innocent.

And - we will see as we read - He also was keeping His hand of protection on the guilty - who someday would realize their sin and come for forgiveness.

By way of review, from chapter 29, verses 31-35, what are the names of Jacob's first 4 children? And who was their mother?

Reuben	Leah
Simeon	Leah
Levi	Leah
Judah	Leah

What is Leah thinking through all these births? Is God's hand in this obvious to Leah?

God

My heart breaks for Leah. She seems, all the way through this whole process of the birthing of the family of Jacob, to be so deeply wanting the love of her husband. She know he loves Rachel best. She gives God the credit, again and again, for giving her one more chance to be loved.

:1-2

1. Jacob and his favorite wife, Rachel, are having a little marital disharmony. What are they arguing about?

Rachel is to the breaking point. She desperately wants children, and stoops to the meanness of blaming Jacob for her infertility. Infertility is a painful, deep ache in the hearts of many women. There is no way to understand its depth unless you have also been infertile.

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Jacob lashes back - it's not his fault (evidenced by the other 4 children he and Leah have brought into the world)

Their love for each other is tested here. Is it enough to have the love of a good man when no children will ever come from your union? My common sense tells me yes, of course it is. But I have 5 children. There is no simple answer to this grief and shame which will not go away.

:3-8

2. What is Rachel's solution to their problem? Have we seen this solution before? How did it turn out last time?

Rachel says, "Fine, then! Take my maid and have children by her, and those children will legally be mine! I will not technically be barren if you can do this for me." Jacob complies (just as his grandfather, Abraham, had complied years before). And not only does he comply once - but it seems he complied at least twice.:

Dan

**Bilhah
(Rachel)**

Naphtali

**Bilhah
(Rachel)**

What is Rachel thinking through these 2 births? Is God's hand in this obvious to Rachel?

She credits these two births to God's hand - and she sees them as a victory over her non-barren sister!

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:9-13

3. When Leah sees Rachel blessed with sons, even though they are from another woman, what is her reaction?

True to the dysfunctional nature of this little family, Leah responds in jealousy to Rachel's blessing. She therefore takes her own maid, Zilpah, and gives her to Jacob so that he can produce children through her for Leah. She probably is assuming she is through bearing children herself.

Gad	Zilpah
	(Leah)
Asher	Zilpah
	(Leah)

What is Leah thinking through these 2 births? Is God's hand in this obvious to Leah?

Leah is happy for 2 more sons for herself, but does not credit God. Is she growing calloused and bitter? Have God's blessings in her life gone uncared for? Is it because she still knows she is not the main love of Jacob's life?

:14-21

4. What happens now?

Leah's oldest son, Reuben, is old enough to be helping with the family business, and comes in from our in the field with a gift of something delicious for his mother. Now it is Rachel's turn to be jealous...and she offers to let Jacob sleep with Leah again in return for the same delicious gift for herself. Yikes! Husband for sale seems to be the commodity right now.

Leah brings forth not one more child, but three! Two sons and a daughter.

Issachar	Leah
Zebulun	Leah
Dinah	Leah

What is Leah thinking through all these births? Is God's hand in this obvious to Leah?

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Leah credits God with the 2 sons. There is no mention of how she feels about the daughter. She feels that now Jacob will at least give her as much attention as he does Rachel. He will "dwell" with her.

:22-24

5. What finally happens?

Suddenly, out of nowhere, a son is born to Rachel. Her shame is over. The longing of her heart is satisfied.

Joseph

Rachel

What is Rachel thinking through in this birth? Is God's hand in this obvious to Rachel?

She credits God with the miracle. And she expects another son will come someday, too.

:25-30

6. Jacob now has 2 wives, 2 concubines, and 12 children (11 sons and 1 daughter) What does he want to do?

It's time to head back to a permanent home where his father still is alive.

7. What has happened to the wealth of Laban while Jacob has been with him?

Laban's wealth has increased greatly while Jacob has served him. He knows very well that Jacob has been the reason for his prosperity.

:31-36

8. What plan does Jacob come up with as he agrees to stay a little longer with his uncle, Laban?

Jacob agrees to stay a little longer - for Laban wants to garner a little more benefit from Jacob's abilities. Jacob suggests that the imperfect sheep and goats in Laban's flock be given to him - and that he stay on to increase Laban's and his own flock even more. Laban agrees - how can he lose?

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9. Why is he willing to stay?

Jacob is willing to stay in order to increase his own wealth before he steps out on his own. And...Jacob knows something about himself...a talent he has acquired and nurtured in the years of serving Laban.

10. Is Jacob trying to cheat his uncle Laban? Is his Uncle Laban trying to cheat him?

Jacob is being shrewd - he knows he can accomplish a great increasing of his own flock by being able to insure that many, many of the future baby lambs and goats are imperfectly colored. Is he cheating? Is he simply being a good businessman? You decide.

Does Laban have something up his sleeve? Further chapters will tell us - yes!

:37-43

11. What do you learn about Jacob as you read these verses?

He has a terrific sense of how to care for and prosper a flock! Today we would call it "husbandry". He has gone to the college of husbandry and graduated with top honors.

12. After all this time with Jacob living with him, what does Laban not realize about Jacob?

Laban does not realize Jacob's great talent with the animals. He does not realize Jacob has perfected a way to determine the look of each animal produced.

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Here's a look at the whole family of Jacob so far, and their mothers, in their order of birth:

Leah	Bilhah	Zilpah	Rachel
Reuben			
Simeon			
Levi			
Judah			
	Dan		
	Naphtali		
		Gad	
		Asher	
Issachar			
Zebulun			
Dinah (girl)			
			Joseph

There is one more son of Jacob to be born, Benjamin – his birth will be later, on their way back to the land where Isaac lives. That will make 12 sons in all.

APPLICATION:

13. How has God protected the innocent?
14. How has God protected the guilty?
15. Can you see, in your own life, how God has protected you when you were innocent? And how about the times God has protected you when you were guilty?
16. How does that make you feel about God?