

Working for Rachel, but Waking up with Leah
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I felt led today to preach a message based on Genesis 29:14-30. It's about Jacob – whose name became Israel. He was the father of the 12 sons who became the 12 tribes of Israel.

Jacob cheated his older brother Esau out of his birthright. As a result, Esau wanted to kill him, so Jacob ran away to his uncle Laban's house for safety and to find a wife from his own people. That's where we pick up the story in Genesis 29.

After Jacob had stayed with Laban for about a month, Laban said to him, "You shouldn't work for me without pay just because we are relatives. Tell me how much your wages should be."

Now Laban had two daughters. The older daughter was named Leah, and the younger one was Rachel. Leah had weak eyes, but Rachel was lovely in form and beautiful. Jacob was in love with Rachel, and told her father, "I'll work for you for seven years if you'll give me Rachel, your younger daughter, as my wife."

"Agreed!" Laban replied. "I'd rather give her to you than to anyone else. Stay and work with me." So Jacob worked seven years to pay for Rachel. But his love for her was so strong that it seemed to him but a few days.

Finally, the time came for him to marry her. "I have fulfilled my agreement," Jacob said to Laban. "Now give me my wife so I can marry her." So Laban invited everyone in the neighborhood and prepared a wedding feast.

But that night, when it was dark, Laban took Leah to Jacob, and he slept with her. But when Jacob woke up in the morning—it was Leah! "What have you done to me?" Jacob raged at Laban. "I worked seven years for Rachel! Why have you tricked me?" "It's not our custom here to marry off a younger daughter ahead of the firstborn," Laban replied. "But wait until the bridal week is over, then we'll give you Rachel, too—provided you promise to work another seven years for me."

So Jacob agreed to work seven more years. A week after Jacob had married Leah, Laban gave him Rachel, too. So Jacob slept with Rachel, too, and he loved her much more than Leah. He then stayed and worked for Laban the additional seven years.

The title of my sermon is Working for Rachel, but Waking up with Leah. It's a message about disappointment. I'm sure you can relate to Jacob and the feeling of disappointment and anger that results when you expect one thing and receive something else. We all face disappointment in life.

I've seen people work hard to get a degree and a job in a certain field, and then when they got that job they didn't like it. They did all that work for Rachel but woke up with Leah!

I know people who wanted to be promoted to a certain position in their company so they worked hard, got the position, and hated it.

They worked hard for Rachel, but woke up with Leah!

I know people who got married thinking they knew the person they were marrying - but they quickly woke up to the fact that the person they married was not the person they thought they were. They feel like Jacob – “Wait a minute – this is not the person I thought I married! I worked for Rachel – but I’m waking up to Leah!”

We all face disappointments in life. But the big one is when we get disappointed in God. That happened to people in the Bible.

- Abraham was disappointed because the child God had promised him had not arrived after years of anticipation.
- Mary and Martha were disappointed in Jesus when He did not show up in time to keep Lazarus from dying.

In our passage today, Jacob was disappointed in Laban because Laban had pulled a classic bait and switch on him. He told Jacob he would do one thing, but then he did something else. Jacob expected one thing – but was given something else.

Please know that disappointment comes from unfulfilled expectations. Disappointment is the feeling of dissatisfaction or sadness when your expectations are not fulfilled.

Think of the word dis – appointment. An appointment is an agreement to meet someone somewhere at a set time. The prefix dis means: to fail, to deprive of, to cause the opposite of. So, disappointment occurs when you think something is going to happen at a certain time or in a certain way or with a certain person but it doesn’t.

The biggest cause of disappointment is delay. God has appointed times for certain events that nothing can alter. His timing determines when His promises are fulfilled. Since God has appointed times – or appointments - for us – the enemy’s plan is to bring us to the place of dis-appointment. He does that by tempting us to think God should work on our timetable. When it doesn’t happen in our timing, we can get disappointed in God.

R.T. Kendall calls this “the Betrayal Barrier.” He believes that 100% of believers go through a period when it seems like God has let them down. They believe for something to happen that doesn’t happen and many of them turn on God. They forget that God is good and His timing is right.

I’ve been in church my whole life and I’ve seen many people who seemed to be well on their way to their appointed destiny. The future God had for them seemed so close they could taste it. Yet, when it did not happen how they wanted or when they wanted – they became disappointed with God.

Some dealt with it and got back on track. Others got bitter and turned on God.

As a result – they were truly dis-appointed – disappointment caused them to miss their appointment with God’s destiny for them.

Listen well: Satan tries to stop our destiny when we accept the power of disappointment into our lives.

If we don’t deal with disappointment, it can turn to disillusionment

If we don’t deal with disillusionment, it can turn to discouragement

If we don’t deal with discouragement, it can turn into despair.

Despair means to be hopeless. To overcome that, we must trust the will of God and the timing of God. Habakkuk 2:3 says:

The vision is yet for an appointed time; but at the end it will speak, and it will not deceive or disappoint. If it seems so in coming, wait for it; because it will surely come...

We have the promise of God that the vision He gives will come to pass. The vision He gives – not the vision we give ourselves. We also have the warning that we will have to wait for it, just like Jacob had to wait for Rachel. Waiting takes faith in God who holds the times and seasons in His hands. Waiting means we must push through disappointment and wait on His appointment.

I know what it’s like to deal with disappointment. In 1992, Deb and I felt led to start a church. We were so excited that God had given us a dream that was coming true. Fast forward 7 years. What began with enthusiasm and hope ended with great disappointment. We believed and worked hard believing for great things, our church died a slow painful death. We felt like failures. We felt like we worked for Rachel, but woke up with Leah. We were disappointed, discouraged and felt like giving up. But our story doesn’t end here. We learned that with God’s help: We can turn failure into success. We can turn disappointment into hope.

God led us to start GFC almost 20 years ago and now we know what it’s like to live our dream. We learned not to give up, but to start over when we were disappointed. Today, I want to teach you how to do the same. First – I want to show you some results of disappointment.

1- Disappointment can cause you to question God

Jacob’s unfulfilled expectations caused him to question Laban. Now – Laban did deceive Jacob – but God will never deceive us. Nevertheless – people sometime think God is telling them something when He didn’t tell them something and when that something that God did not tell them does not happen, they blame God. And sometimes they turn against God.

Listen - life doesn’t always turn out the way we expected. But don’t let that get you on the wrong road headed the wrong direction. That will only make things worse. Disappointment can get you headed in the wrong direction. Disappointment can get you out of the will of God.

Disappointment can cause you to miss the blessing of God.
So, don't let disappointment turn you from God. He's your only hope!

2- Disappointment can cause you to not see God in your situation

When we are disappointed because our hopes and dreams are not coming true – God can be right in the middle of what's happening and we can't even see it! We can be like Jacob who said in Genesis 28:16

Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it.

God can be right in the middle of our finances, but we're so disappointed in our bank account that we don't see God.

God can be right in the middle of our lives, but we're so disappointed in ourselves that we don't see God.

God can be right in the middle of our marriage, but we're so disappointed in our spouse that we don't see God.

God is right there in all these disappointing situations, but disappointment keeps us from seeing Him.

3- Disappointment can cause you to not believe God's Word

If we turn on God when we are disappointed, we tend to not believe the word of God. And if we stop believing, we stop receiving.

I looked up all the Bible verses on hope and most of the verses tell us to hope in God. Second to hoping in God – most verses tell us to hope in God's Word. For instance, Psalm 119:74 says:

I have put my hope in Your word.

With the help of God and His Word, we can turn disappointment into hope. How? Here's what we need to do to overcome disappointment. I Corinthians 13:13 says:

These three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

1- To overcome disappointment, you need faith in God, hope in God and love for God.

Jacob had faith in Laban's word, but he ended up being deceived. Fortunately, Hebrews 6:18 says: *It is impossible for God to lie.* So – when we get a promise from God – we can have the faith to count on that word being true and that it will not disappoint.

Jacob had hope, which is faith for the future. He had hope because he had the promise that Rachel would be his wife. Unfortunately, Laban betrayed him.

Fortunately, we don't have to worry about that because God will never betray us.

But here's the main thing Jacob had: love for Rachel. Genesis 29:20 says:

Jacob worked seven years to pay for Rachel. But his love for her was so strong that it seemed to him but a few days.

When you are working for someone you love – it is not disappointing to wait. For us – that means if we are working for God because we love God – waiting on Him will not be a problem. Why? Because we are secure in His love for us. And we have a great love for Him.

Don't say you love God and yet you turn on Him when you have to wait on Him. When you do what you do for God because you love Him – not just because of obligation, you will be able to wait on Him without disappointment.

2- To overcome disappointment, focus on what God is doing, not on what He is not doing.

As long as our eyes are on ourselves – we will stay disappointed.

As long as our eyes are on our circumstances – we will stay disappointed.

As long as our eyes are on what hasn't happened yet – we will stay disappointed.

To overcome disappointment, we must get our eyes back on God and on what He is doing.

When things are tough, we need a word from God. When we know we've heard from God – we can stand in faith even when we have to wait. Romans 8:24-25 says:

Hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.

Hope is not a "hope so" maybe mentality. Hope is faith for the future! And hope enables us to wait patiently. Hebrews 11:1 says:

Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.

My wife is such an example of faith and hope to me. In 1980, we built a house in Arlington, but when we went on staff at a church years later, we could no longer afford that house. We had to move from that house to an old, dilapidated rent house. That was very disappointing because we worked for years for the new house and now we were in an old house.

We thought we would be there for a year or 2, but we were there for over 10 years. Eventually, my wife felt led to look for a house to buy. I was looking at our bank account - not at God - and I did not want to waste my time looking at houses we could not afford, so I refused to go. I told her, "If you want to go, go. But we have no money and we're not getting a house, so you're wasting your time." She said, "No, I'm not. And you'll see." I said "whatever" and stayed home while she looked.

She looked for years. I told her she was wasting her time. She said, “No, I’ve got a word from God that we’re getting a new house and I’m going to look until I find it.” I said, “Whatever.” She came home one day all excited and said, “I’ve found it.” I said, “Found what?” She said, “Our new house.” “Oh really?” “Oh yes” and then she told me all about it. I asked how much it was. She told me. I laughed and asked, “How are you going to pay for it?” “I’m believing God to provide for it.” And I said, “Whatever.”

Well - she convinced me to come to Grand Prairie to look at the model home. I did and liked it but thought we were wasting our time because we didn’t have enough for a down payment. But Deb convinced me of a word from the Lord – so we both started working 2 jobs trying to make the money for a down payment.

Then one day we were out to dinner with an old friend of ours and she asked us how much money we need for our down payment. We said we weren’t exactly sure. She said, “Would \$10,000 help?” After we picked ourselves up off the floor she told us that she felt that God was leading her to give us \$10,000. Needless to say, today we are living in that house because God birthed expectation in my wife’s heart and she held on to until she got it.

Since then we’ve talked many times about how the desire for a house was God’s plan to get us to South Grand Prairie so we could start GFC. I often wonder what would have happened if we had done things my way: no expectation – no faith – no hope. We might still be living in a broken-down rent house and GFC might never have been born. I could have missed God because of my lack of expectations. And you’d be missing out on this great preaching today!!

To deal with disappointment, we must hear from God and hope in God!

3- To overcome disappointment, God must be the source of our expectation.

Psalm 62:5 says: *My soul, wait silently for God alone, for my expectation is from Him.*

If we are the source of our own expectations, we will be disappointed. But when God is the source of our expectation, we will not be moved.

Our church went through a tough time years ago. Attendance was down. Offerings were down. It was very disappointing. I’ll never forget one morning in prayer when God gave me a word from Zechariah 9:12 says:

Return to the stronghold, you prisoners of hope. Even today I declare that I will restore double to you.

That very day we grabbed hold of that promise and did not let go.

We started believing for God to double our attendance – offerings – outreach – impact – double portion of anointing and blessing. And God answered that prayer and gave us increase in every area. Within a few years our attendance and our offerings more than doubled!

So I encourage you today – overcome disappointment by becoming a prisoner of hope! Do you want to turn disappointment into hope? Then get a word from God and hold on to it until it comes to pass.

Pray that promise. Confess that promise.
War over that promise. Don't give up on that promise.
Praise God in advance for fulfilling that promise.

Here's the problem – when you're disappointed you don't feel like praising. There doesn't seem to be anything to be thankful for. And how can you worship a God you are blaming for your situation?

At times like this, we must take the advice of the Psalmist in Psalm 43:5

Why are you downcast, O my soul? Why so disturbed within me? Put your hope in God, for I will yet praise Him, my Savior and my God.

Even when we are disappointed, we must yet praise God.
Even when we are discouraged, we must yet praise God.
Even when we are depressed, we must put on a garment of praise for a spirit of heaviness.
Putting on a garment of praise will turn your disappointment into hope. How?
Praise will bring the presence of God into your life. Hebrews 6:19 says:

This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil.

Praise gets us into God's presence where we find an anchor called hope. And hope is the opposite of disappointment. So, I encourage you today, overcome your disappointment by praising God until you get into His presence and your soul gets anchored in hope! Get a promise from God's Word that will give you hope!

You might feel like you worked for Rachel but woke up with Leah –
But if your hope is in God –
You might cry some nights – but you will wake up with joy!
You might feel weak sometimes – but you will wake up with strength!
You might feel empty sometimes – but you will wake up full of the Spirit!
You might feel like prayer is work sometimes – but keep praying and one day you will wake up with your answer!
You might feel praise is hard work sometimes – but praise anyway and you will wake up to God's presence!
Reading the word is work sometimes, but if you plant the word of God in your heart, it will bear fruit! It will not return empty.