

Jacob Leaves Laban

(Genesis 30-31)

Introduction

Do you have a bad temper? Have you ever gotten angry with someone? What happens when you get mad at somebody? Do you yell at them or call them names? Have you ever said something that later you wished you hadn't? Is it hard for you to say, "I'm sorry"? What's the best thing to do when you are angry? (Ask God to help you control your feelings, and talk to the person that you are angry with. Listen to their side of the story. Try to see the situation from their side.)

Today we're going to see how Jacob handles his anger against Laban.

Opening Prayer

Father, it's important for us to learn how to properly deal with our anger. You don't want us to lose control nor do You want us to say things or do things that would disappoint You. Help us to pay attention this morning to see how Jacob handles his anger in such a patient and gracious way. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Memory Verse

*Don't sin by letting anger control you. Don't let the sun go down while you are still angry, for anger gives a foothold to the devil.
(Ephesians 4:26-27)*

Lesson

We've been learning about the Fathers of our Faith. [Teacher, review the lesson series up to this point.]

Today we're going to pick up the story in Genesis 30, verse 25. It's been 14 years since Jacob arrived in Haran. By now Jacob has 11 sons and 1 daughter and he's ready to move back to his homeland.

Genesis 30:25-26

Soon after Rachel had given birth to Joseph, Jacob said to Laban, "Please release me so I can go home to my own country. Let me take my wives and children, for I have earned them by serving you, and let me be on my way. You certainly know how hard I have worked for you."

But Laban didn't want to lose his free laborer. So he begged Jacob to stay and told him he'll pay him anything he wants.

Genesis 30:31-32

"What wages do you want?" Laban asked again. Jacob replied, "Don't give me anything. Just do this one thing, and I'll continue to tend and watch over your flocks. Let me inspect your flocks today and remove all the sheep and goats that are speckled or spotted, along with all the black sheep. Give these to me as my wages."

Jacob tells Laban that he doesn't have to pay him money. He says he'll continue tending Laban's flocks and herds for no pay if Laban would give him the speckled, spotted, or black sheep. Jacob is willing to leave all the pure white ones for Laban.

Genesis 30:33

In the future, when you check on the animals you have given me as my wages, you'll see that I have been honest. If you find in my flock any goats without speckles or spots, or any sheep that are not black, you will know that I have stolen them from you."

Jacob is saying that Laban will know whether or not he is stealing sheep from Laban's flocks because the sheep will be color-coded. If Laban finds any pure white ones among Jacob's flock, he'll know Jacob was dishonest.

Genesis 30:34

"All right," Laban replied. "It will be as you say."

So Laban agreed to the bargain.

Genesis 30:35-36

But that very day Laban went out and removed the male goats that were streaked and spotted, all the female goats that were speckled and spotted or had white patches, and all the black sheep. He placed them in

the care of his own sons, who took them a three-days' journey from where Jacob was. Meanwhile, Jacob stayed and cared for the rest of Laban's flock.

Laban separated out the speckled, spotted, or black sheep. So, Jacob continued to keep Laban's flock which started out with all pure white sheep. But God caused the females to give birth to young that were streaked, speckled, and spotted. As a result, Jacob became very wealthy, with large flocks of sheep and goats, male and female servants, and many camels and donkeys.

God blessed Jacob for all of his honest, hard work for Laban by multiplying his flocks. But Laban's sons became jealous of Jacob's prosperity and began to grumble and complain to their father.

Genesis 31:1-2

But Jacob soon learned that Laban's sons were grumbling about him. "Jacob has robbed our father of everything!" they said. "He has gained all his wealth at our father's expense." And Jacob began to notice a change in Laban's attitude toward him.

Ask: Have you ever felt jealous? (Teacher, let the children talk about what jealousy is, how it feels, and give examples.)

Jealousy always causes trouble among people. Jacob's cousins were greedy. They felt that the flocks that Jacob had should be theirs. But Jacob and Laban had made an agreement. Those sheep were Jacob's pay for all those years of free labor. However, Laban's sons felt cheated out of what they thought should be their inheritance.

But God was taking care of Jacob just like He had promised to take care of Jacob's grandfather Abraham and his father Isaac. As we shall see, God used Laban's son's anger against Jacob to make him decide it was time to move away from Laban and go back to the land of his own father.

Sometimes God uses uncomfortable circumstances in our lives to get us to move on and change directions in life. Just like the way Jacob got his sheep to move on with the use of a staff and rod, God

sometimes uses hard times in our lives to get us to move on to new places.

Genesis 31:3

Then the LORD said to Jacob, "Return to the land of your father and grandfather and to your relatives there, and I will be with you."

Jacob talked to his wives Leah and Rachel and they decided to go back to the land that Jacob had come from. So one day while Laban was busy shearing sheep, Jacob and his wives and sons and camels left without telling Laban.

But Laban chased after Jacob and caught up with him.

Genesis 31:26

"What do you mean by stealing away like this?" Laban demanded. "How dare you drag my daughters away like prisoners of war?"

Jacob got angry that Laban chased after him like a criminal.

Genesis 31:41-42

Yes, for twenty years I slaved in your house! I worked for fourteen years earning your two daughters, and then six more years for your flock. And you changed my wages ten times! In fact, if the God of my father had not been on my side—the God of Abraham and the fearsome God of Isaac—you would have sent me away empty-handed. But God has seen your abuse and my hard work. That is why He appeared to you last night and rebuked you!"

Evidently God had spoken to Laban in his dreams that night and told him to let Jacob leave. So, Jacob and Laban made peace and they parted ways the next morning on good terms.

Genesis 31:55

Laban got up early the next morning, and he kissed his grandchildren and his daughters and blessed them. Then he left and returned home.

It is always good to make up with people you are unhappy with. The Bible tells us not to let the sun go down on our anger. It also tells us that God doesn't even want us to pray to Him or worship Him until we have gone to the person that has offended us and make up with him or her. It doesn't matter whose fault it is. Don't wait to solve differences between you and someone else. Even if the other person is in the wrong, go to him or her and make it right between you as soon as you can. Matthew 5:9 says, *"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God."* We must be quick to forgive so that anger does not fester. The devil would like to take advantage of our anger, but the Holy Spirit can give us power to rise above it.

CLOSING PRAYER

Father, teach us to be peacemakers like Jacob. Help us to be quick to forgive people when they treat us wrong or disappoint us. Give us the power of the Holy Spirit to rise above our anger. Help us to make it a policy to not let the sun go down on our anger. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

GAME CENTER

Who Am I?

Pin the names of the characters we have been studying about on the backs of the children. Each child has to guess who they are by asking yes or no questions of the other children. Use the following names:

- Abraham
- Sarah
- Isaac
- Rebekah

- Jacob
- Esau
- Rachel
- Laban

Alternatives to this game would be as follows:

- a. Let the class give the child clues to what character they are.
- b. Let the child have the class guess who he is: you can give copies of the questions that follow to the child and let him ask the class those questions.
- c. Or, divide the class into teams and ask the following questions of the teams for points.

Ask the following questions until the children guess who you're talking about:

Abraham:

1. My father's name was Terah. We lived in a city called Ur. Who am I?
2. One day, God told me to take my family and leave our home in Ur to go to a place that He would show me. I did not know where we were going, but I wanted to obey God. We left Ur and started a long journey. Who am I?
3. On the way to the land God had promised me, we stopped in Haran. My father died there. Soon, God told me this was not the place He had prepared for us, so we left and started out once more. We came to a land called Canaan. God told me that this was the land He had promised to me. Who am I?

4. One day, Sarah, my wife, had a baby at the age of 99! Who am I?

Sarah:

1. God told my husband and I to go to a new land. We didn't know where it was. We had to travel a long way from our home in Ur to get there. Who am I?
2. God promised my husband that if we would trust Him and go where He told us, that He'd make our descendants a great nation. Who am I?
3. I was very old when I had my first child. I thought it was pretty funny that God would give me a child at the age of 99, so I named him "Laughter." Who am I?

Isaac:

1. My father was a very important man. He was rich and had many herds and cattle and camels. My mother and father were very old when I was born. I made them very happy. Who am I?
2. My father and mother and I lived in a land called Canaan. In this land there were many people who worshiped idols. My parents did not want me to marry anyone from this land. They wanted me to love and serve God with my wife. They sent a servant to Haran to look for a wife for me. Who am I?
3. Our servant went to Haran. He asked God to help him find me a good wife. A girl came to the well and gave him and his camels a drink of water. She was very kind. Who am I?

Rebekah:

1. I am a young and beautiful shepherdess. One day I went down to the well to draw water for my sheep. I noticed a man who looked like he'd been traveling a long, long time. Who am I?

2. I offered the stranger some water and asked him if I could water his camels, as well. Who am I?
3. I took the stranger home with me and he gave me lots of gold jewelry and asked if I would go to a far away place with him to be the wife of his master. Who am I?

Jacob:

1. I had a twin brother. He was very different than I was. I like to stay close to home, but my brother liked to hunt and be outdoors. Who am I?
2. One day I saw my brother coming in from hunting. He was very hungry. I told him if he would give me his birthright, I would give him a bowl of stew. He was so hungry he thought he was going to die, so he gave away his birthright. Who am I?
3. When my father was very old and nearly blind, my mother and I made a plan to make him think I was my older brother. I put animal skins on my hands and arms. Mother made a stew that tasted just like the stew my brother made for him. He thought I was my older brother and gave me the blessing. Who am I?
4. My brother was very angry when he found that I had gotten the blessing. My mother was afraid for me and sent me away to Haran to her brother's house. I had a dream on the way. I saw angels going up and down on a ladder that reached from the ground to Heaven. I knew that God wanted me to serve Him. I promised to follow Him from then on. I never forgot my promise. Who am I?

Esau:

1. I was a hairy man. One day I was so hungry I was willing to sell my birthright to my brother for a pot of stew. Who am I?

2. Later my brother tricked my dad into giving my younger brother the special birthright blessing that I should have received, because I was the first born. Who am I?

Rachel:

1. My aunt met a man at a well who had come to my village of Haran to find a wife for his master's son. At this same well, some 40 years later, I met my cousin who became my husband. He helped me draw water for my sheep. Who am I?
2. My father made a bargain with my cousin who wanted to marry me. He promised to work for 7 years without pay to get my hand in marriage. Who am I?
3. Then on my wedding night, my dad played a trick on my husband to be. Dad took my older sister to him instead of me. Then my husband had to work another 7 years without pay. Who am I?

Laban:

1. My whole life is stamped by self-centeredness. I made arrangements for my sister to marry a very important man who was rich and had many herds of cattle and camels. Who am I?
2. I used my daughter's lives as bargaining chips to gain more wealth. I tricked a very important man into working for me without pay for 14 years to get my youngest daughter as a wife. Who am I?

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