

Th131 God's Plan

Lesson Th131-8 Love Freely Given

In our last lesson we learned that love is not complete in itself, but rather love is made complete when it has something to love. In this lesson we will learn that love cannot be forced upon someone, but rather love should be freely given, freely received, and freely returned.

A person's heart can be filled with love, but until the love is given away it is incomplete. For love to be perfect it must be shared. But what happens if the love that is given is rejected? The love cannot be perfect or complete unless it is warmly received. Finally, for love to be perfect there must be a relationship. Love can be given and received, but if love is not returned to the giver, the love is incomplete. It is a one-sided love. For love to be perfect and complete, first it is given, then received, and then returned to the giver. This kind of love cannot be forced or commanded to happen. Love must come from both the heart and mind. Only then is it perfect and complete.

Abraham's son Isaac married Rebekah. They had twin sons, Esau and Jacob. Although the boys were twins, they were nothing alike. Esau, the eldest son, was his father's favorite, while Jacob was his mother's. Like most brothers they grew up competing with one another. Esau was the strong outdoorsman who could hunt. Jacob liked staying near home and helping his mother prepare food. Although Esau as the eldest was entitled to the family blessing, Jacob and his mother tricked his father Isaac into giving it to Jacob instead.

So Esau became angry with Jacob. He knew that his aging father would soon die. "The days of sorrow over my father's death are near. Then I'll kill my brother Jacob," He said to himself.

Jacob's mother heard of Esau's plans and called to Jacob. "Your brother Esau is planning to get back at you by killing you. Now then, my son, do what I say. Run away at once to my brother Laban in Harran. Stay with him until your brother's anger calms down. When he forgets what you did to him, I'll let you know. Then you can come back from there. Why should I lose both of you in one day?"

And so Jacob left the land of Canaan and journeyed to Mesopotamia to the homeland of his Uncle, Laban. Jacob stopped outside of the city to rest at a well. Shepherds with their flocks had gathered around the well but a large stone was rolled over the mouth of the well and so none of the sheep were being watered. Jacob watched as a beautiful young shepherd girl approached the well with her sheep.

"Who is this girl?" Jacob asked the other shepherds.

"It is Rachel, the daughter of Laban."

Jacob quickly rolled the stone away from the well so that Rachel could water the flock. "I am Jacob, your cousin!" He announced. Word was sent immediately to Rachel's father,

Laban, and Jacob was invited to come and stay with his relatives. Jacob immediately began to help his uncle in all of his work. After a month of hard labor, Laban spoke to his nephew. "You have been working for me this past month and have not asked for any wages. It is not right for you to work for free, tell me, what shall I pay you?"

Now Jacob had fallen deeply in love with Rachel, Laban's youngest daughter. Rachel was beautiful and had a lovely figure whereas Rachel's older sister, Leah was not attractive at all. Jacob wanted to marry Rachel but he had arrived at his uncle's home with no money or wealth. He had nothing to offer Laban as a gift for his daughter. "My dear uncle, you ask me what my wages should be, and I would gladly work for you for seven years and would wish only for your daughter Rachel to be my wife."

"It is better for me to give her to you than some other man." Laban said. And so Rachel was betrothed to Jacob.

For the next seven years Jacob worked hard for his uncle. The years passed as days because of his love for Rachel and soon the seven years were complete. Jacob asked for Rachel to be given to him in marriage. Now Laban was a very shrewd man. His entire household had been blessed the past seven years and he knew that there was a blessing of God upon Jacob. So Laban set into play a plan to keep Jacob within his employment.

The day of the wedding arrived. The bride was dressed in beautiful silks and fine clothing. A veil covered her face in the tradition of the land. Jars of wine were opened and soon everyone had become quite drunk as the celebration lasted into the late evening. Finally, a very drunk Jacob and his new wife were led into the marriage tent. The next morning Jacob awoke to find that the woman lying next to him in bed was not Rachel but her sister, Leah! Jacob staggered to his feet, and sought out his father-in-law Laban.

"What have you done to me? I worked for you so I could marry Rachel, didn't I? Why did you trick me?"

Laban replied, "It isn't our practice here to give the younger daughter to be married before the older one. Complete this daughter's wedding week. Then we'll give you the younger one also. But you will have to work for me another seven years."

So Jacob completed the week with Leah. Then Laban gave him his daughter Rachel to be his wife. Now Jacob loved Rachel more than he loved Leah. And he worked for Laban for another seven years.

And thus began a difficult life for Jacob, Rachel, and Leah. Jacob and Rachel loved each other deeply and although Jacob would perform his duties as a husband to Leah, he did not love her. Leah loved Jacob, but he would never give his love to her. Leah hoped that by giving birth to sons for Jacob that this would win his love. Leah gave Jacob six sons but the Bible tells us that this did not win his heart. But when Rachel finally became pregnant and gave to Jacob a son, things were different. They named Rachel's son Joseph and it would be Joseph who would become Jacob's favorite.

This story demonstrates the nature of love. Jacob freely gave his love to Rachel who received it, and gave her love back to him. Leah tried to give her love to Jacob but he would never receive it and return his love to her. Jacob's love for Rachel was complete and brought them joy, but Leah's love was rejected and she lived a life of sorrow.

This lesson is **important** because it teaches that only when love is freely given, freely received, and freely returned is the blessing of love complete.

The **main truth** of this lesson is that because God has shown his love to us we, in return, should love him.

To **review** this lesson, answer the following questions:

1. For love to be complete or perfect, love must first be given. What must the recipient of the love do? [Pause for 5 seconds.]
 - A. If you said that the person who receives love must return their own love for the love to be complete, you are correct.
2. Jacob had two wives. Which one did he love? [Pause for 5 seconds.]
 - A. If you said that Jacob loved Rachel you answered correctly.
3. What was the name of the wife Jacob did not love? [Pause for 5 seconds.]
 - A. If you said, "Leah," you are right.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to replay this lesson two or three times until you can repeat the story accurately. Then, find someone and tell them this story and explain how love must be freely given, freely received, and freely returned. Also memorize the following Bible verse and teach this verse to another person.

"We **love** because Jesus **first loved** us" (1 John 4:19).