

The Sons of Jacob

Genesis 29:31-30:24; 35:16-26

MEMORY VERSE

PSALM 127:3, 5

“Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD. Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them.”

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

Four pie pans, half as many Ping-Pong balls as you have children, markers of various colors, and a body of Christ basket (use your imagination).

A glass bottle or glass for each child (not to keep), food coloring, an eye dropper or spoon or ladle, 4 bowls, water a metal spoon or fork for each child, a large table, and a plastic or paper table cloth.

Plastic drinking straws, heavy paper (index card thickness), paper clips, brown paper bags, and string.

ATTENTION GRABBER!

Pie Pan Ping-Pong Relay

You need 4 pie pans, half as many Ping-Pong balls as you have children, markers of color, and a body of Christ basket (use your imagination).

Draw various colors of smiley faces on the Ping-Pong balls. Divide the class into two teams for a relay. Make two lines at one end of the classroom. Put the “body of Christ basket” at the other end. Two team members at a time must volley the little ping pong men back and forth between them until they get to the body of Christ. If they drop the man, they may pick him up, but only with the pie pans (work together!), no hands allowed.

Explain that all kinds of different people can be in the body of Christ. **Though different from each other, we are all part of God's family.**

LESSON TIME!

Today we are going to learn about the birth of Jacob's sons. We will also be reminded, as we consider the struggle of Leah and Rachel, that God sees our needs and hears our cries for help. As we reflect on the birth of Jacob's twelve sons and the beginning of a new nation, we will consider that God has made us different from each other. Though one family, God has an individual plan for each one of us. **Though different from each other, we are all part of God's family.**

GENESIS 29:31-35

When the LORD saw that Leah was unloved, He opened her womb; but Rachel was barren.

So Leah conceived and bore a son, and she called his name Reuben; for she said, "The LORD has surely looked on my affliction. Now therefore, my husband will love me."

Then she conceived again and bore a son, and said, "Because the LORD has heard that I am unloved, He has therefore given me this son also." And she called his name Simeon.

She conceived again and bore a son, and said, "Now this time my husband will become attached to me, because I have borne him three sons." Therefore his name was called Levi.

And she conceived again and bore a son, and said, "Now I will praise the LORD." Therefore she called his name Judah. Then she stopped bearing.

Here we have the beginning of a struggle within Jacob's family. If you remember, Jacob wanted to marry Rachel, but Laban tricked Jacob into marrying Leah. Just think of how Leah felt when Jacob was finally wed to Rachel and ignored her. The Lord saw how Jacob was treating Leah, and had compassion on her and opened her womb, allowing her to have children. Rachel was unable to bear children at this time.

In that day, having children was a sign God's blessing; so, it was very important to both Leah and Rachel to have children. Leah hoped that having children would cause Jacob to love her more.

God sees when people suffer and are not treated fairly. In His perfect time and way, He will help. God knew about Leah's suffering; and at the right time, He helped her. Remember, God is watching us like a father watches over His children. He sees our needs; He hears our calls for help.

Just look at the children that God gave to Leah. Through Levi would come the line of priests that eventually would minister to the Lord in the tabernacle and the temple. We also see Judah--through whose line, Jesus would come.

Leah named her first son Reuben, which means, "The Lord has surely looked on my affliction." With the birth of Reuben, Leah said, "Now therefore, my husband will love me." Leah had prayed to the Lord about her suffering.

The next son born to Leah was named Simeon, which means "God heard." She then gave birth to another son, and his name was Levi, again naming him because she hoped her husband would become attached to her. Her fourth son was named Judah, which means "Let Him be praised." Leah was very thankful for her children. During this entire time, Rachel remained barren.

GENESIS 30:1-24

Now when Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, Rachel envied her sister, and said to Jacob, "Give me children, or else I die!"

And Jacob's anger was aroused against Rachel, and he said, "Am I in the place of God, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?"

So she said, "Here is my maid Bilhah; go in to her, and she will bear a child on my knees, that I also may have children by her."

Then she gave him Bilhah her maid as wife, and Jacob went in to her. And Bilhah conceived and bore Jacob a son.

Then Rachel said, "God has judged my case; and He has also heard my voice and given me a son." Therefore she called his name Dan.

And Rachel's maid Bilhah conceived again and bore Jacob a second son.

Then Rachel said, "With great wrestlings I have wrestled with my sister, and indeed I have prevailed." So she called his name Naphtali.

When Leah saw that she had stopped bearing, she took Zilpah her maid and gave her to Jacob as wife.

And Leah's maid Zilpah bore Jacob a son.

Then Leah said, "A troop comes!" So she called his name Gad.

And Leah's maid Zilpah bore Jacob a second son.

Then Leah said, "I am happy, for the daughters will call me blessed." So she called his name Asher.

Now Reuben went in the days of wheat harvest and found mandrakes in the field, and brought them to his mother Leah. Then Rachel said to Leah, "Please give me some of your son's mandrakes."

But she said to her, "Is it a small matter that you have taken away my husband? Would you take away my son's mandrakes also?" And Rachel said, "Therefore he will lie with you tonight for your son's mandrakes."

When Jacob came out of the field in the evening, Leah went out to meet him and said, "You must come in to me, for I have surely hired you with my son's mandrakes." And he lay with her that night.

And God listened to Leah, and she conceived and bore Jacob a fifth son.

Leah said, "God has given me my wages, because I have given my maid to my husband." So she called his name Issachar.

Then Leah conceived again and bore Jacob a sixth son. And Leah said, "God has endowed me with a good endowment; now my husband will dwell with me, because I have borne him six sons." So she called his name Zebulun.

Afterward she bore a daughter, and called her name Dinah.

Then God remembered Rachel, and God listened to her and opened her womb.

And she conceived and bore a son, and said, "God has taken away my reproach."

So she called his name Joseph, and said, "The LORD shall add to me another son."

Rachel is very jealous of her sister. First she went to Jacob and said, "Give me children or else I die." Jacob got angry and asked whether she thought he was God who could open her womb. Desperate to have children, Rachel gave her maid to Jacob to have children for her. Remember Sarah tried this same approach to have a son for Abraham. What trouble it caused! And, when Rachel took matters into her own hands, it only caused more jealousy and more problems for the whole family.

How important it is for us to remember to trust God even in impossible situations! Even in those situations where it looks as if you know what to do and you feel like you do not need to acknowledge God, pray and seek His direction (Proverbs 3:5-6). Seeking God's wisdom can keep us out of trouble.

So, Rachel's maid gave birth to two sons and Rachel names the first Dan, which means "God has vindicated me." She believed that God had now corrected her wrong, her barrenness. The name of the second, was Naphtali, which means, "to wrestle" and reflects the struggle with her sister. Leah then responded by giving her maid to Jacob. Leah's maid gave birth to two sons named, Gad, "troop," and Asher, "happy."

The continuing saga moves on. Reuben, Leah's son, found some mandrakes, a type of flowering plant which people thought helped them to have children. Rachel, desperate to have her own child made a deal with Leah to get the mandrakes.

Leah then has another son named, Issachar, "My hire" because of the deal made with the mandrakes. The name of Leah's sixth son was Zebulun which meant "dwelling." The Bible records one more child born to Leah—a daughter, who she named Dinah.

"And God remembered Rachel." God bestowed His grace upon Rachel. She finally had a child, a son whom she named Joseph. Perhaps, her long wait built in her important character qualities—such as humility, patience, dependency. Rachel was thankful to God for taking away her barrenness. The name, "Joseph," meant, "To add another son." Then Rachel prayed that God would "add another son."

Rachel was happy, finally, looking in faith for a second child. Jacob now had many children and several of them had different mothers. These children were very different from one another, and we will learn in upcoming lessons that they did not always get along.

GENESIS 35:16-26

Then they journeyed from Bethel. And when there was but a little distance to go to Ephrath, Rachel labored in childbirth, and she had hard labor.

Now it came to pass, when she was in hard labor, that the midwife said to her, "Do not fear; you will have this son also."

And so it was, as her soul was departing (for she died), that she called his name Ben-Oni; but his father called him Benjamin.

So Rachel died and was buried on the way to Ephrath (that is, Bethlehem).

And Jacob set a pillar on her grave, which is the pillar of Rachel's grave to this day.

Then Israel journeyed and pitched his tent beyond the tower of Eder.

And it happened, when Israel dwelt in that land, that Reuben went and lay with Bilhah his father's concubine; and Israel heard about it. Now the sons of Jacob were twelve:

the sons of Leah were Reuben, Jacob's firstborn, and Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun;

the sons of Rachel were Joseph and Benjamin;

the sons of Bilhah, Rachel's maidservant, were Dan and Naphtali; and

the sons of Zilpah, Leah's maidservant, were Gad and Asher. These were the sons of Jacob who were born to him in Padan Aram.

Once in the land, the family was complete with the birth of Benjamin. Rachel received the desire of her heart, a second son born to Joseph; however, she died while giving birth. She named her son, Ben-oni, which means "son of my pain," but Jacob renamed him Benjamin, "son of my right hand."

Then, Jacob buried Rachel and erected a pillar over her grave. We read of the sin Reuben committed that would cause problems for him and for his family

Next, we read about the names of all of Jacob's sons. These men would become the heads of the twelve original tribes of Israel. God would make a great nation from the descendents of these twelve men.

Just as twelve different men became a family that would be used to birth a nation and fulfill God's promises; so we who believe in Jesus, though very different, are a family. God has given us all *different* gifts and talents and, *individually*, we contribute to His purposes being accomplished on earth. He has a perfect plan all mapped out for each one of us!

Romans 12:4,5 states, "For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another." Do you think it's important that we get along well with each other. Jacob's sons had trouble with this! May we be encouraged and may we encourage others to develop and use their gifts and talents and to fulfill the plan God has for them. **Though different from each other, we are all part of God's family.**

Glass Symphony

You need a glass bottle or glass for each child (not to keep), food coloring, an eye dropper or spoon or ladle, four bowls, water, a metal spoon or fork for each child, a large table, and a plastic or paper table cloth.

Start each glass or bottle off with random amounts of water. Divide the glasses or bottles into four groups. Color the water in each group a different color. Call the groups by the colors that are in their containers: “red group,” “blue group,” etc.

Instruct each group to tap gently on their glasses and by adding or subtracting water from them, make all the groups “sound good together.” This may end up as harmony or all on the same pitch, but tell them to work together in deciding. Seeming chaos will erupt, but they are learning to work together. When they think they are done, conduct a few symphonies by pointing to the different groups.

Explain that the different groups represent different people groups and that we all are needed to make harmony.

Memory Verse Activity: Equipped Quiver

You will need plastic drinking straws, heavy paper (index card thickness), paper clips, brown paper bags, and string.

Help the kids make arrows by cutting two 1 1/2” slits in the ends of each straw. Cut a paper triangle, which is 2” on each side for each arrow. This slides into the slits you cut.

Put a paper clip in the point end of the arrow. The paper bag is the quiver. Fold the top edge of the open bag down once. Punch two holes in the double part of the bag for the string.

Let kids do as much as they can themselves. Five arrows constitute a full quiver.

Explain that you will look closely at the benefits of a well-equipped quiver. What can arrows be used for? Protection, getting food, fun and many other things. Compare the quiver full of arrows with a godly family (Psalm 127:3-5).

PRAYER

Lead the children in a prayer of thanksgiving for our adoption as His sons and daughters. If there are any children who have not yet responded to the Gospel, give them opportunity to do so.