

LOOKING FOR LOVE

Gen. 29:16-30:1

Two calendars on my desk—one humorous, one serious.

Valentine's Day thought on the serious, thought-provoking calendar:

"Love at first sight is easy to understand.

It's when two people have been looking at each other for years that it becomes a miracle."

I never did my best work in "Poetry Appreciation". I could easily have failed a course in poetic expression.

My historic low in expressive reading came one night when I tried to recite to my wife one famous piece of romantic poetry

It asks: *"How do I love thee? Let me count the ways!* I won't demonstrate how it went!

As I consider Rachel's life, I can't help but wonder "how Jacob would've answered:

"How do I love thee? . . . "

The passage doesn't give much insight into Jacob's answer.

It merely tells us that he set his eyes on her and it was love at first sight.

What's more clear is how Rachel *thought* he would answer it.

Secular society in their day said a woman's value was based on child bearing.

Rachel and Leah had *both* fallen for the lie.

They bought into the popular culture of their day.

People of their day would have responded: ***"How do I love thee? Let me count the kids!"***

For them, woman's value was based on how many children she could produce.

It was a *performance* standard, based on something she couldn't control.

This issue looms so large; it's *almost* the only glimpse we get into Rachel's life.

Three scenes give insight into Rachel's life:

1. Jacob's initial encounter and love for her

2. Conflict and competition over their children

3. Rachel's theft of her dad's gods

[She's mentioned again in . . .]

Ruth 4:11 — Rachel and Leah are depicted as the *source* of the nation.

Children flowed from them (*Value—sense of worth—based on child-bearing!*)

Prosperity wish people pass on to Ruth: she might be as *productive* as these two women who *gave birth* to the nation.

Jer. 31:15 => Matt. 2:18 Only NT reference, Rachel's role: "*mother*" of Israel.

She's the one who laments the loss of her **children**.

Except 3 X in Gen., *Scripture only remembers Rachel as "Mother of Israel"*

Child-bearing issue becomes so central, you can't think about Rachel without remembering that! It becomes her only claim to fame!

It *doesn't* remember Sarah nor Rebekah that way!

JACOB'S INITIAL ENCOUNTER WITH RACHEL

TWO key FACTS about Jacob:

1. God led Jacob to meet Rachel Genesis 29:1-12

God led Jacob to right place to meet Rachel — clear confirmation of God's direction and blessing.

God was guiding Jacob's steps!

2. Jacob fell for Rachel from moment he laid eyes on her. 29:14-18

Only one thing Laban has that Jacob really wants: **Rachel!**

Even in initial encounter (vv. 1-12), we see his reaction to her.

The stone was large — They only removed it once.

They waited 'til everyone arrived, then cooperated to remove it
Jacob sees Rachel; he's so excited he removes it singlehandedly!

He kisses her and cries with a loud voice.

He sees God's hand in all this and is excited.

3 OBSERVATIONS become apparent:

1. 29:16-17—RACHEL WAS BEAUTIFUL!

"Weak eyes" = common way to say she wasn't especially attractive.

She was sort of plain and dull.

You could say, "her eyes just didn't have that *'sparkle'!*"

Jacob wanted *RACHEL* from the very beginning.

There's never any question which woman he's attracted to!

2. 29:18, 20, 30—RACHEL WAS LOVED.

Rachel was loved by Jacob

Rachel *always* enjoyed her husband's love and loyalty

Jacob gladly worked 7 years for her, because he loved her. 29:20

Laban's treachery, exchanging unloved Leah, giving her to a man who was desperately in love with Rachel, . . .

Display of God's justice in turn-about with younger and older daughters: Jacob learned lesson about deceit!

Didn't make marital situation more tolerable for Leah *or* Rachel.

They were caught in a miserable marriage!

Jacob worked 7 *more* years for the one he really loved: Rachel.

Leah's children did nothing to change that!

Rachel was loved by God!

3. YET, RACHEL DIDN'T FEEL LOVED.

Her sense of worth was based on performance.

She had to produce children to establish her worth (value) 30:1

Secular society's value system — value based on child-bearing

According to THEIR society, *"That's what women were good for!"*

Competition shows how desperate each was to be loved.

29:31-35 Leah's consolation

God saw that she was not loved and gave her children *as consolation*.

It *doesn't* say God gave her children as a means to win her husband!

Desire for love and acceptance is one of strongest drives we face.

Unrequited love, lack of recognition, or total disregard is hard to endure.

One recourse: pursue love *by any means*, without regard to cost or long term effects.

That competition is reflected in naming of Leah's children:

Reuben = "Yahweh saw her misery"

Simeon = "God heard"

Levi = "Attached" (her husband would be *attached* to her)

Judah = Leah would be satisfied to "*praise Yahweh*"

Leah may have learned an important lesson.

With Levi she hoped to earn her husband's allegiance.

Now she seems content to let go of Jacob and cling to the Lord.

She will praise Him. Period.

30:1-2 Rachel's jealous response

She has his love and loyalty, yet *SHE'S* the one who gets jealous!

30:3-8, 9-13 Battle of servant girls

Competition for love and worth seen in naming of *servants'* children.

Rachel's children through Bilhah reflect struggle and feeling of victory.

Dan = "God has vindicated me"

Naphtali = "I fought" with my sister.

30:22-24 Rachel's vindication (elevation)

But **childbearing can't produce love**. That strategy *never* works!

Love isn't produced by *performance*.

30:14-18 Look at how low things got:

Rachel sells her husband for a night, in exchange for some fruit

Leah enjoys rubbing it in! Anger and jealousy flows from story.

God's standard => one man/one woman => united—made one flesh FOREVER

When you break that standard, the results are painful

If ever anyone had a justifiable excuse for bigamy, it was Jacob.

But that didn't change the pain in their home!

Mistakes in marriage will do that! That's the way divorce works too!

You may have an excellent reason, but it won't make the pain go away.

Jesus pointed to this; disciples responded, "*Then it's better not to get married at all!*"

There's a moral to this part of the story: **Be sure to choose well!**

Choose a godly mate! Choose a mate who is pursuing godly goals!

Don't gamble with this choice!

Mistakes in choosing a partner produce painful consequences!

Rachel is the loved wife, though she never really *feels* loved.

God looks after Leah, the unloved one.

She's the neglected one. But God is her consolation.
Ultimately, *Leah's children* form **royal and priestly** lines.

In painful, unbearable homelife, **God** watches Leah and meets her needs.
Jacob doesn't meet her needs. ***God meets her needs!***

Leading polling organization conducted survey to determine what people are looking for; Results surprised analysts: LOVE, JOY, PEACE, first 3 in list of fruit of Spirit.
People are looking for love.

Problem is *they aren't having much luck finding it.*

Common denominator in marriage counseling: ***People don't FEEL loved!***

Philosophy of secular society was wrong.

Performance can't earn love, security, or significance!

Same philosophy is still around!

For most it isn't based on child bearing, though some try, when their marriage is falling apart.

It still won't produce love!

We still look for love, security, and significance, on basis of performance.

Love, security, and significance don't come from performance — from being good enough (whether it's good at having children, or anything else we do).

Come from *One who loves us completely — without conditions!*

We don't have to EARN His love.

Infact, we CAN'T earn His love!

He loves us because He has *chosen* to love us

We ENJOY love when we understand God DOES love us — totally!

Just the way we are!

We're looking at God's people here — Godly people.

Families we're looking at are on list of superheroes of faith!

These godly women, wives of some of the most godly men to ever walk on planet earth, are crying out to be loved.

WHAT'S WRONG WITH THIS PICTURE?

It doesn't matter how ideal spouse may be, they'll never satisfy need to be loved, secure, and significant!

Jacob couldn't meet that need for Leah, **NOR for Rachel.**

Only God can fill that need! (*Satisfy that thirst*)

Whether you're husband or wife, if you're looking to your spouse to make you feel loved, *you're looking in the wrong place. It won't happen!*

Motivated by concept that if we just *perform* well enough we'll be loved, secure, and significant, we try to be good enough at *something* to be loved.

It doesn't work! It didn't work for Leah! It didn't work for Rachel!

It won't work for you either, whether your name is George or Cheryl.

You will never perform well enough to earn your mate's love!

Love is a choice. God has chosen to love us.

We can choose to enjoy that love, and share His love with others.

Where do WE turn for love, security, and significance?

Are WE looking to wrong source?

What kinds of things do WE cling to, to try to establish OUR value — our sense of worth — in order to get someone to love us?

Teenagers in back seat of car feel pressure to surrender personal values, to *GET* love—but it doesn't work—it doesn't earn LOVE! In fact, you LOSE respect!

Adults too, feel pressured to surrender godly standards to be *accepted* by those around us!

But it doesn't work! Nothing we DO will ever make ANYbody love us.

Love is a choice!

GOD alone has *already* chosen to love us, with NO strings attached.

He loves us because He loves us.

We can rest secure in HIS love.

We don't have to pursue it, seeking *somebody* who loves us!

God has already demonstrated His love—it's unconditional!

We'll never earn nor deserve it—yet He has given it to us —because of His grace!

We just have to *believe* it, and *enjoy* it!