

# Envy

## Genesis 30

Welcome to the great baby race! We're in the third generation of Abraham's family, and after sowing the wind and reaping the whirlwind, Jacob spends the next seven years with his two sister-wives and two girlfriends having twelve children. If that isn't enough, uncle Laban continues his efforts to deceive and defraud Jacob. Envy has been at play in Genesis already but now takes center stage.

### **Cause**

Jealousy is the desire to keep something that is one's own by right (Ex. 34:14; 2 Cor. 11:2). Covetousness desires something that someone else has (1 Cor. 12:31). Envy wants something that someone else has and, unlike emulation, wishes them harm; it is selfish and malevolent. We envy those who are most like us. It's not the guy in the highest tax bracket, but the one with the same job but who makes more money who tempts us to envy. Jerry Bridges says we're tempted to envy the person who is most like us and excels in areas we most value. The envious want to be equal or greater and are willing to bring another down to achieve it. We don't know much about envy, and as much as we might think we are above it, as soon as an individual can compare himself another, he is prone to it. It begins in Genesis probably with Satan but certainly with Cain and Abel (4:5). Saul envies David whose martial reputation was greater (1 Sam. 18:7). Rachel sees her barrenness beside Leah's boys, and envies her (v1). Laban sees Jacob, his own kin, prospering and envies him (29:14; 30:27). Run your own envy scenario. Who is like you, near you, and blessed with what you love more than you are?

### **Curse**

The final act of envy is murder, but there are many miserable mile-markers on the way (Mk. 15:10). Strife, reviling, accusing, slandering, evil-speaking, malice, deceit, hatred, confusion and self-seeking are all named around envy (Rom. 1:29, 13:13; 1 Cor. 3:3, 13:4; Gal. 5:21, 26; Phil. 1:15; Jms. 3:16). This desire is idolatrous, but idols can't deliver, only disappoint (v2). Isaac prayed for years for Rebekah to conceive. Jacob still isn't praying and instead allows Rachel to give him Bilhah, just like Abraham allowed Sarah to give him Hagar (v3; 16:1-3). Rachel wants children, Leah wants love, and Laban wants to continue ripping Jacob off (vv2, 27-28). Rachel is totally confused, thinking God gives her Dan because she is justified in her rivalry and Naphtali because she wins (vv6-8). Leah falls into similar sin (vv9-13). They trade things that shouldn't be traded, the mandrakes don't work, and Leah concludes that God paid her with Isaacar for giving Zilpah to Jacob—as if the wages of polygamy are sons (v18)! Her envy blinds her from what God and her husband are doing (v20). Laban is also foolish, and though he says God has blessed him because of Jacob, he tries to steal from Jacob (vv34-35).

### **Cure**

The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 6:23). You would think God would wipe this family out and start again. Perhaps he wants us to be encouraged in our families! But in another sense, this is our family. Behold Israel. Despite how despicable their actions and theology, God listens to Leah, remembers and hears Rachel, and blesses Jacob (vv17, 22, 43; 31:12-13). The cure is God's grace, and though no one sees it to the extent they should, Moses is telling us that God isn't finished with His people.

Calvin: "That we may be cured of envy, it behooves us to put away pride and self-love; as Paul prescribes this single remedy against contentions, "Let nothing be done through vain-glory" (Phil. 2:3)." If you believe that God loves you and has given you every blessing in Jesus, it's not a problem that your neighbor is richer, more beautiful and successful and taller than you. The blessings of others are cheerfully none of our business, and to the extent we see them, we get to rejoice in their blessings, which in turn blesses us. God doesn't bless us with earthly blessings based on how much He loves us. But Jesus did give up everything so that we could be blessed. Envy put Jesus on the cross and died there with Him. Let it there die there in you.

## NOTES FOR LITTLE SAINTS

### Today's Passage: **Genesis 30:25-28, 31-32, 41-43**

*25 And it came to pass, when Rachel had borne Joseph, that Jacob said to Laban, "Send me away, that I may go to my own place and to my country. 26 Give me my wives and my children for whom I have served you, and let me go; for you know my service which I have done for you." 27 And Laban said to him, "Please stay, if I have found favor in your eyes, for I have learned by experience that the Lord has blessed me for your sake." 28 Then he said, "Name me your wages, and I will give it." ... And Jacob said, "You shall not give me anything. If you will do this thing for me, I will again feed and keep your flocks: 32 Let me pass through all your flock today, removing from there all the speckled and spotted sheep, and all the brown ones among the lambs, and the spotted and speckled among the goats; and these shall be my wages. ... 41 And it came to pass, whenever the stronger livestock conceived, that Jacob placed the rods before the eyes of the livestock in the gutters, that they might conceive among the rods. 42 But when the flocks were feeble, he did not put them in; so the feebler were Laban's and the stronger Jacob's. 43 Thus the man became exceedingly prosperous, and had large flocks, female and male servants, and camels and donkeys.*

1. Laban was Jacob's uncle but also his boss. What trick did Laban play on Jacob with his daughters Rachel and Leah?
2. Not only was Laban a bad father and father-in-law, he was a greedy man who was trying to take Jacob's money and keep him from succeeding. This is called envy. Have you ever wanted something that wasn't yours, and taken it? How did that work out? If your parents don't know about it, tell them!
3. Laban tried to take Jacob's livestock, but instead of whining or becoming bitter, Jacob worked hard and used clever methods to thrive. What happened as a result (verse 43)?
4. Draw picture of Jacob and his speckled sheep and goats.

### **Memory Verse to Recite Next Week:**

*22 Then God remembered Rachel, and God listened to her and opened her womb. —Genesis 30:22*