

Sermon Notes 4/25/21

“Freedom and Family”

How should we respond to Genesis chapter 31?

1. Talk to loved ones about major _____.

Genesis 31:3-4

1 Peter 3:7

2. Demonstrate a good work _____.

Genesis 31:6-7

2 Thessalonians 3:7-9

3. Encourage one another to obey God’s _____.

Genesis 31:16

Hebrews 3:12-13

Hebrews 10:24-25

4. Stick with God’s family for true _____.

Genesis 31:42

John 8:34-36

Romans 8:15-16



Laban searching for his gods by Bartolomé Esteban Murillo, 1670

Life Group Discussion Questions

Week 31: April 25 – May 2

Genesis 31

After Jacob left his father's house, God appeared to Him in a dream and promised to protect him, bless him, and bring him back to the Promise Land (Gen. 28:13-15). 20 years later, in chapter 31, God tells Jacob it is time to go back to the land of his fathers. For 20 years Jacob felt like he was trapped and forced to work for a master he could not trust. But God was with Jacob. In this chapter we see some of the specific ways God was protecting, blessing, and leading Jacob to freedom. Kent Hughes notes how this event in Jacob's life gives us a preview of the freedom God would bring to His people through Moses as well as the freedom God brings to us through Jesus Christ.

Looking forward, Jacob's exodus from Mesopotamia provides a prophetic outline of Israel's exodus from Egypt. Here Jacob's large family flees from Laban; there a multitude of his descendants will flee Pharaoh. Here his family plunders Laban; there they will plunder Pharaoh and his people. Here Laban is forced to let Jacob's family go; there Pharaoh will be forced to let Jacob's descendants go. And all of this is prophetic of the glorious exodus that believers would find in Christ, the ultimate Israel, who plundered the power of evil and led them out of bondage to Satan.¹

In this chapter, we also see some important principles that will help us when we are facing difficulties in family relationships.

Read Genesis 31:1-21

1. What were Laban's sons saying about Jacob? (31:1-2)
2. What did God tell Jacob to do in verse 3?
3. What kind of work ethic did Jacob demonstrate? (31:6-7)
4. How did Laban try to cheat Jacob in verse 7?
5. How did God prevent Laban from harming Jacob (31:7-9)

¹ R. Kent Hughes, *Genesis* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 389.

6. What did God reveal to Jacob in a dream about male goats? Why? (31:10-12)

7. What did God remind Jacob of in verse 13? Why?

8. What did Rachel and Leah want Jacob to do? Why? (31:14-16)

Jacob, Rachel, and Leah have all grown in their faith and wisdom. While their concerns seem to be focused on their financial security, it is noteworthy that Rachel and Leah encourage their husband to obey God's word. And Jacob communicates with Rachel and Leah in a way that takes their feelings into consideration. Tom Bradford notes,

Hebrew society greatly revered women, and any notion that the Bible promotes the idea that women were then, or are now, of less value than men is just uninformed. Notice here that the Holy Scriptures show that the first thing Jacob did after God told him it was time to leave, was to consult with his wives. And it's obvious by the way they responded that Jacob greatly considered their feelings and thoughts on the matter.²

9. What did Jacob do in verses 17-18?

10. What did Rachel do in verse 19?

Hughes writes,

As to why Rachel stole them, the Nuzi tablets suggest that the possession of the family gods strengthened your claim to an inheritance. Another possibility is that Laban used them for divination, and that Rachel was thwarting his ability to detect Jacob's escape. Perhaps it was just spite—so Rachel could demonstrate her contempt for Laban's gods.³

11. Why do you think Jacob left without telling Laban? (31:20-21)

² Tom Bradford, *Genesis: The Book of Foundations* (Seed of Abraham Ministries, 2011).

³ Hughes, *Genesis*, 391.

Read Genesis 31:22-42

12. What did Laban claim that he would have done if Jacob had told him about his plans to leave? (31:26-28)
13. Why did Laban decide not to harm Jacob? (31:24, 29)
14. How did Jacob respond to the accusation that he stole Laban's idols? (31:32)
15. What happened when Laban tried to search Rachel's tent for his missing idols? (31:34-35)
16. What questions did Jacob ask Laban after he was done searching for the missing idols? (31:36-37)
17. What charges did Jacob bring against Laban as he described the 20 years he worked for Laban? (31:38-42)

In verse 42, Jacob concludes that God's judgment is been declared against Laban. He refers to God as "the Fear of Isaac" (see also 31:53). Bruce Waltke observes,

This could be translated, "the Awesome One of Isaac," that is the One of Isaac who inspires dread (see 31:24, 53). This is a unique epithet for God. The God who providentially provided for Isaac, as Laban knows, also providentially protects Jacob, as Laban is now learning.⁴

Read Genesis 31:43-55

18. What did Laban still consider to be his property in verse 43?
19. How did Jacob and Laban finally settle their differences? (31:44-55)
20. How can we effectively teach a good work ethic to others?
21. How can we encourage family members to obey God's word?
22. What can you do to encourage peace in your family?

⁴ Bruce K. Waltke, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2001), 432.