

CGIKawartha-2026-WarrenLee-Women Who Built Israel

Well, good afternoon. Some of you I remember. It's been since 2019 that I actually came back to

Lindsay. Obviously COVID, right? That lockdown and I would travel once a year for work. So last year was the first year the company allowed me to travel again. So last year, Murray invited me down to go to Burlington, which I'd never been. So I thought, okay, I'll go there. Murray moved away. So this year when I had my opportunity to come again, I had to call them up and say, would you like a guest? Which they were amiable to the proposition.

Now for those of you who don't know me, Stefan said I might as well give you a bit of an introduction.

I'm 56 years old. I've been in the church as of, will come this April of 2027, 35 years. So I came into the church at age 22. And I came directly out of the world. So I was doing everything you weren't supposed to do.

But God decided to call me and wake me up. And my dad used to follow Mr. Armstrong back in the 70s. In 1977, he was in Cyprus on peacekeeping duties. And he listened to Mr. Armstrong over radio Luxembourg for the first time. So he came back and he

rode away. I won't say we, he rode away. And he got the literature and Bible correspondence course

and booklets and the whole nine yards. And then he was very interested in the church. At 13 he tried to get us to not keep Christmas and keep the Day of Atonement. And I remember having a candy

on that day and thought, oh no. But we weren't in the church. And then it just faded.

We had moved from Calgary to Vancouver Island in Victoria where my dad was posted. And he followed

the Worldwide Church of God for a couple more years, and then it just petered out. And in my context of my life in 1991 was very significant, obviously Desert Storm. And I remember listening

to The World's War with my dad and Mr. Armstrong and that voice and the four horsemen of the

apocalypse. So I knew what was coming, and I thought, oh, no, maybe this is leading up to it. And that was kind of the motivation that God sort of prompted me to start.

looking at his word so i literally asked my dad dad where's that box of booklets and plain truths and everything and he went and got it and it was in december of 91 i was 21 years old and when i

got my license at 16 you know i i was never home my dad actually came up it was a friday evening

i'm sitting at our dining room table at age 21 and he stood at the door and he looked at me and he

said hi You haven't been home on a Friday night in five years.

And that wasn't an exaggeration. Every single weekend I was out with my friends. So that was the

turn and it was pretty abrupt. And I never looked back. So we came into the church. We rode away. We came into the church together, my father and I. April 4th, 92. I'm a dates person, so I remember many dates in my life. And then we were baptized together on November 13th as well, 1992. And then I had the opportunity. I was going to pursue a career in policing or law enforcement. I had my degree at Camosun College. I applied to SFU. And then the minister said, apply to Ambassador. I thought, okay, I'll apply to Ambassador. And I prayed that, God, if you want me to be here, reject me from Ambassador if you want me to go to Ambassador. only accept me if I can get a career out of it because I don't want to go and spend another two or three years getting a degree that I'm not going to be able to do anything with. So I got accepted to both. So my decision was to go to Ambassador. So I went there and I was able to do the degree in three years and had an amazing time as a student, but was also a tumultuous time because that's when the church imploded. I sat in the field house on that fateful day of December 24th, 94, when Mr. Dekotch gave that sermon. And it didn't take but hours. And people had peeled off to go to the Long John Silvers and Red Lobster and abandon everything they had believed in less than five or six hours. I worked security at that time. I had a broken wrist, long story. I fall 40 feet out of a tree. I won't go there, but... I was moved to security as a student because we had jobs as international students. And on Saturday nights, every student had to be back on campus by 1 a.m. And me and a young guy at the time, Ed Dowd, we were standing on College Drive, which was between all the girl storms. And we could hear the yelling and the hollering, which was a good 400 or 500 meters away at the security booth at the opening of the campus. The reason I tell the story is they came in in a convoy, about three or four cars, hanging out the windows, yelling and screaming, rotten-eyed drunk. And that's not saying that didn't happen on the campus before. Students are not always going to be, you know, especially when you turn of age in the states of 21. The point was, as I said to him, I said, God has, like, turned the vacuum on and sucked his spirit out of the campus in what seemed like the blink of an eye. Anyway, I'll move on. I graduated from Ambassador in 96 and I was one of the fortunate students. I got a job at Nortel, which if you're Canadian, everybody knows Nortel. And I started in Dallas and then I ended up moving to Ottawa in 99. My wife and I got married in 1999. She's from Victoria. I was from Victoria. And then we moved to Ottawa for three years to 2002. And she got pregnant and we wanted to move. back home to be with our parents.

My parents and my wife's parents lived 17 minutes apart at the time. So we thought, well, you know, we'll have the grandkids get raised around the parents. Nortel proposed the idea of working remotely, and I said, okay, what does that look like? And so they laid it out for me, and I said, okay, let's do it. So we bought a house in Ottawa. We put it up for sale. We sold it in five days, and then we moved intermittently. She moved in July of 2002, and I moved in August 1st. And I've worked remotely for Nortel. Then we got bought out by Siena. For this August, it'll be 24 years. So I was one of the original ones, the OGs, as they say, in working remotely. So I have a wife, Suzanne. She was by Sue. This June will be 27 years we've been married. And we have two children, Madison, who's 22. She lives in Alberta, Calgary. And I have a son, 18, Jacob, who's currently at Waterloo right now. which I can't go out to see him because it's exam time. So I'll pick him up next Saturday night at the 18th in Victoria at the airport at 11 o'clock at night. So we're pretty anxious for him to come home. It's been a full nine months since we've seen him.

And then from a personal perspective, my wife and I, now that we're empty nesters, which has been amazing, we thought we would miss them, and we do miss them, but being an empty nester is pretty fun. We volunteer a huge amount in our community. My wife actually works for the food bank called Loaves and Fishes in Nanaimo. She's part-time, she works 12 hours a week, but we often obsess over the food bank, talk about it. lot of the time and we both run we coordinate free food markets we run one every Sunday together I'm the greeter she's the coordinator and then on Monday night sometimes I fill in for somebody else at one of the other locations downtown and then also on Sunday nights the church that hosts the food bank also hosts the spaghetti dinner on Eagles wings it's called and so we do that most Sundays as well I'm the pasta maker so And I don't give many complaints, so that's pretty good. So that's kind of my background.

You can ask me questions. There's lots of details I could fill in on the church portion, sitting in Big Sandy when it happened. So I got the opportunity to see the carnality of both sides firsthand.

And it wasn't pretty, but to be expected, very human nature. And then also, just as a reminder, on the back table, you'll see a white box on the very right of the table. So I brought a box of canned wild Pacific salmon for so everyone can have a tin. So a little gift from the West Coast. We have water here. So you can enjoy it and remember me or throw it at me. Okay. So I chatted with Stefan and Sandy. We discussed. I brought a couple different sermons. What do you think would be best? And since most, he said in this room. Don't have a huge history in the Church of God background worldwide. Probably just him, he said. I decided to forgo that sermon.

And I'm going to give a sermon that I gave a couple years ago. And I started doing a Bible study on Joseph. Because I think he's an amazing personality. And I thought I'd be able to jump right in and talk about Joseph. However, when I began to dig deeper, My study took me in an entirely different direction. My initial intent was to lay the groundwork, provide some context, a few paragraphs, maybe a couple pages. And then, without as much as a blink of an eye, I was entrenched into two personalities of very prominent women. Here was an incredible story that I was familiar with. And I can honestly say that I never paid close attention. to the specific details yet it was staring me in the face and i could not ignore it and believe me i tried i was on a mission i was going to go this direction god had other plans so the reality is in order to get to joseph we need to take a needed detour through the lives of Leah and Rachel and it's required and if you cannot remember all those pertinent details if you've studied them or read them hopefully this message will assist in refreshing your memory, and hopefully aid you in retaining those details. So in the sermon today, we're going to dive into the lives of these two women and glean lessons from human nature that we can assess in our own lives.

But we also can see how God can take the bad and orchestrate, and that's a perfect adjective, orchestrate the circumstances for good.

And we're talking good. On a whole other level.

So if your life feels like a hot mess. Sometimes in the modern vernacular.

Or if you feel burdened down by trials. Or current circumstances. Rest assured that God has not abandoned you. And you will. He will produce fruit in you.

And for us in the church. It's imperative. That we join the process.

Rather. than stand in direct opposition to it. And we do that sometimes.

That's natural in us. We don't want to change. We like to fight it. So if you like points, the first point, we're going to talk about Laban. And Laban,

actually, point number one is Laban initiates the rivalry between the sisters.

We're going to look at the lives of Leah and Rachel, and the first personality we see in the equation is actually Laban. And for those who may not remember, Laban is the brother of Rebekah,

Isaac's mother. So within the family tree, Laban is in fact Jacob's uncle.

And please note that Laban's actions lay the foundation for what will be a growing conflict between

his two daughters. And this is my opinion, I offer here, that this was probably not the best choice

Laban could have made. But because he could not see where things would lead, he probably thought it was a good choice for him. And it followed a cultural norm.

Effectively, he provoked his daughters to wrath. Wrath between one another.

Parents are admonished to not provoke their children to wrath. That's Ephesians 6.4. And this is a

general principle for any parent, regardless if you're in the church or not. And this one act by their father. Sets up at least a decades long rivalry.

Jacob goes back to the house of Bethuel. And who's Bethuel you ask?
Good question. Thank you for asking it. Just kidding. Bethuel is the Syrian of Paddan Aram. And I probably butchered that. Paddan Aram. He is the son of Abraham's brother Nahor. And you can find those details in Genesis 22. If you want to go look them up yourself. And so that makes Bethuel Abraham's nephew. and was the father of Isaac's wife, Rebekah. Now the God of Abraham is not a stranger to Bethuel or Laban, as we learn through the account of Eleazar, Abraham's servant. So Jacob, like his father, returns to the house of Bethuel to choose a wife. However, Jacob does this personally, rather than Abraham sending a servant to find Isaac a wife. Most know the story that Jacob fell in love with Rachel almost instantly. It was love at first sight. And by how the Bible describes this meeting, Rachel must have been very easy on the eyes. And when Jacob was a young man, he was described as a plain man, dwelling in tents. Genesis 25, 27, if you want a scripture reference. And this is a vast contrast to Esau. Esau, who's described as a cunning man. a man of the field. So to update in our modern parlance, Esau is a man's man, while Jacob was the quiet homebody, a mama's boy. It's recorded that Jacob, which means supplanter, has a deceitful side that flourishes with the help of his mother, Rebekah. And I do not believe it's a stretch to say that Rebekah played favorites and favored Jacob. her smooth-skinned son over her hairy semi-primate son Esau. This too was a parent provoking her children to wrath. The distinction between Esau as a man of the field and Jacob the mama's boy leads many in error to think that Jacob is physically weak. That's our modern stereotype, right? When Jacob first encounters Leah at the well, pardon me, Rachel at the well, I apologize, he pulls off a feat of strength that would humble many a man. Rachel and the other sheep herders arrive at the well, but they cannot water the sheep because the stone is rolled back and covering the well's mouth. Genesis 29.6 specifically mentions, and they roll the stone back from the well's mouth. So all these shepherders had to get together, combine their strength, and roll it back. So this means that the stone, while round in some fashion, is like a wheel. And again, notice the word they. The stone was too large for a single person to do this. Well, Jacob single-handedly rolls the stone back so the sheep can be watered. Was this enough to make him burst a blood vessel in his head? Did he pull a muscle, throw out his back? I jest. But he's a far cry from being a weakling. He then kissed Rachel and lifted up his voice and wept. And I bet all women would love to have that effect on a man. The story unfolds. And because of Jacob's love for Rachel, he covenants with Laban in exchange for Rachel's hand in marriage. You know the story. But let's read this in Genesis 29. And please, if you would, put a marker, if you've got a silk marker or something you can put,

because we're going to spend a fair bit of time here in Genesis 29 and Genesis 30. So Genesis 29,
and we'll start in verse 14. Genesis 29,
14.

Genesis 29, verse 14.

And Laban said to him, Surely thou art... my bone, and my flesh, and he abode with him the space of
a month. And Laban said unto Jacob, Because thou art my brother, shouldst thou serve me for naught,

tell me what shall thy wages be? And Laban had two daughters.

The name of the elder was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel. Leah was tender-eyed,

but Rachel was beautiful and well-favored. And Jacob loved Rachel and said, I will serve thee seven years. for Rachel thy younger daughter. And Laban said, it is better that I give her to thee than that I should give her to another man.

Abide with me. So it's here Laban's scheme is hatched.

He knew exactly what he was doing. Remember, God is going to use the evil that Laban had toward

Jacob for good.

Was Laban upset that Leah was overlooked? I don't know.

Verse 20 of the same chapter, And Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed unto him but

a few days for the love he had to her. And Jacob said unto Laban,

Give me my wife, for my days are fulfilled, that I may go in unto her. And verse 22,

And Laban gathered together all the men of the place and made a feast. So the scheme is about to be

exposed, and I honestly have more questions than I do answers. In the same way that Rebekah and

Jacob schemed against Esau, did Laban and Leah do the same to Jacob?

When did Leah know about her dad's plan? I don't think Laban walked into the tent the same day and

told Leah what was happening. I think that's a stretch. Let's pick it up in verse 23.

Genesis 29 verse 23.

And it came to pass in the evening that he took Leah his daughter and brought her to him. And he

went in unto her. And Laban gave unto his daughter Leah Zilpah his maid for a handmaid.

Verse 25. And it came to pass that in the morning, behold, it was Leah.

And he said to Laban, What is this that thou hast done unto me? Did I not serve thee for Rachel?

Wherefore, then thou hast beguiled me. And Laban said, It must not be done so in our country to

give the younger before the firstborn. Fulfill her week, and we will give thee this also for the service which thou hast shalt serve with me, and yet seven other years. And Jacob did so, and fulfilled her week, and he gave him Rachel, his daughter, to wife also.

So there's a number of important outcomes here that happen. And I'm just going to list them off, and I think, or let me ask you, think of how God used all the strengths and the weaknesses The 12 tribes of Israel. Think how incredible it was for God to orchestrate all these events. To work out exactly as he wanted. So the first thing I'll point out is we know Jacob was deceived.

And ended up with Leah. And he was very upset. He got to experience the sting of deception. For himself. And he declared that Laban had beguiled him. a taste of his own medicine, so to speak. And surprise, surprise, he didn't like it, right?

Second point, something tells me Jacob should have known the custom of the land, and while we

cannot speak to the times, I have a feeling it was probably not much different in his family tree. The cultures were probably similar.

The third thing I'd point out is, Jacob is a day or two into his marriage to Leah, and he asks for Rachel. which was the covenant agreement. That's what he agreed upon. Laban agreed with him.

So then Jacob, for the fourth point, Jacob agrees to Laban's term in fulfilling Leah's week of marriage, feasting. I did a little bit of research, and since Jacob did not have a house of his own at this point, from looking in the scriptures, and also maybe the potential to lose Rachel forever, it may have been a small price to pay. After the week of marriage feast,

Jacob was able to marry Rachel. He did not have to wait a full seven years. That's a common misperception among some. He just had to wait a week. Genesis 29 verse 30.

And it reads, And he went in also unto Rachel, and he loved also Rachel more than Leah, and served him yet seven other years, him being Laban. Jacob loved Rachel more.

This would have made Leah feel less than. Talk about awkward.

And the rivalry is born.

Verse 31. And when the Lord saw that Leah was hated. He opened her womb.

But Rachel was barren. So Jacob's married to both. But this introduces a new dynamic.

And better said a new contention.

The word for Lord here in this verse 31 is Yehovah. Which is Strong's 3068.

Who we know to be Jesus Christ.

He's using his covenant name. He steps in. And now he's going to drive the bus.

The contention had to do with the resentment and bitterness between Rachel and Leah.

And this was so bad that God records for us that Leah was hated.

Not just disliked, hated. The Hebrew word here is Strong's 8130.

S-A-N-E and it's pronounced Sane. Rachel viewed her own blood sister as an enemy and a foe.

A pretty serious escalation. And there's a very distinct rift between them and the jealousy is building on Leah's side first.

Then God does something incredible on Leah's behalf. He flips the script.

And in what is likely an unexpected turn of events,

unexpected in the eyes of Jacob and Rachel, he directly intervenes and humbles both Rachel and

exalts Leah.

Here's our first indication of God working out his purpose.

So in the midst of the heartbreak and the shame Leah felt with being the lesser,

Leah was not overlooked or unloved by God. Mark that point.

God rewarded her with children, which was such an important honor for a wife in those days. As events unfold, this circumstance will be used by God to bring about the lineage to eventually result. In the birth of Christ and the fulfillment of the covenant promises.

Let the birthing Olympics begin.

Point number two. And this is what I want you when you read it. You don't often pick up on this.

But point number two is the conversion of Leah.

So as we end Genesis 29, Leah had given birth to four sons.

And please think about what God is spiritually orchestrating here. What I want you to tune into is

that God is turning the feelings that Leah has about her own situation. For what is not likely her own benefit. But actually for the benefit of Rachel as well. Please turn with me to Genesis 29.

And let's read about the names and the descriptions of the four sons.

Genesis 29 verse 32.

Verse 20, pardon me, Genesis 29 verse 32. You may just have to flip a page. It reads,

And Leah conceived and bare a son, and she called his name Reuben. For she said, Surely the Lord hath looked upon my affliction. Now therefore my husband will love me.

Reuben, son of Jacob, this son was born out of her affliction. Her feeling like she was second fiddle. And the birth of Reuben would win the affection.

We can safely glean that Leah was jealous for attention from Jacob due to Rachel.

Genesis 29, 33 is next. And she conceived again and bare a son and said,

Because the Lord has heard that I was hated, he hath therefore given me this son also.

And she called his name Simeon. Simeon means hearing. She felt that God had heard her cries. Because she was hated.

Verse 34. And she conceived again and bare a son and said,

Now this time will my husband be joined unto me. Because I have borne him three sons.

Therefore his name is called Levi. Levi means attached.

And Leah felt the birth of the third son would create a bond with Jacob. And I'm speculating here.

that this would push Rachel out of the picture. According to E.W.

Bollinger's Appendix 10, The Spiritual Significance of Numbers, the number three denotes completeness. As three lines complete a plain figure, hence three is significant of divine perfection and completeness. This may have played a role in her thinking.

However, God is working out that she's not just to be attached to Jacob, she's to be attached to God.

Verse 35. And she conceived again and bare a son,

and she said, Now will I praise the Lord. Therefore she called his name Judah, and left bearing. Judah,

the fourth son, and if you've not recognized it yet, the idea of the names are very...

And should become prominent. Because they lay out events that are transpiring too. Notice with the

birth of Judah. Leah's focus has changed.

Her focus is not on child bearing. Captured by the phrase left bearing.

It is on God. Now I offer a speculation. And it involves the birth of Judah. Marking a turning point in her life. I called it, the name of the point, the beginning of Leah's conversion. The first three sons all had a connection to Jacob. And it's only through the birth of Judah that there's no mention of Jacob and only a mention of God. The house of Bethuel were at the side of the family that does not appear to know God. Rachel hid her father's idols. So we know that God was not actively working with Laban. As God was with Abraham and his descendants. A further point here is the name of Judah or praise.

It actually became a prophetic blessing to Judah. So at the end of Jacob's life he's pronounced the blessing upon Judah. And he says, you are he whom your brothers shall praise. Your hand shall be on the neck of your enemies. Your father's children shall bow down before you.

That's Genesis 49 if you want a scripture reference. So since the rivalry is underway, we're going to keep score per se.

Leah 4, Rachel 0.

As we roll into Genesis 30, we're then introduced to Rachel's circumstances and mindset. And it's at least roughly four years in here if she popped a baby out once a year or once every nine months. Rachel is in her own eyes failing as a wife because she's barren.

Leah's thinking was initially motivated out of desperation to have her husband's attention, and then it shifted her attention to focusing on God. However, Rachel, the woman that was the complete package to Jacob, was deep in grief because she could not bear

children to Jacob. Now Rachel... like all human beings, is subject to human nature.

And grief escalated from jealousy to envy. And envy... very dangerous mindset or attitude. Let's read Genesis chapter 30 verse 1 if you'd turn there please. Genesis 30 verse 1.

Verse 1 reads, And when Rachel saw that she bare Jacob no children, Rachel envied her sister and

said unto Jacob, Give me children or else I die. Does it seem like Rachel understands that God will

give her what she can bear? or not more than she could bear? You don't have to turn there, but 1 Corinthians 10, verse 13 comes to mind. I'll read it for you. No temptation has overtaken you

except that is such as common to man. But God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted

beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape that you may be

able to bear it. Now, before we move on from this verse, I want to highlight here that Rachel again

envied her sister. What's the difference between envy and jealousy?

Although many people consider them to be synonymous, they actually have distinct meanings. If you're jealous, you feel threatened, protective, or fearful of losing one's position or

situation to somebody else.

is the painful feeling of wanting what someone else has so they no longer have it.

Like attributes or possessions. It's not enough that I'm jealous if you owned a Ferrari. No, I'm envious. I don't want you to have it. I want that car.

Her mindset of, or else I die, results in a bitter dispute with Jacob.

The Hebrew indicates that his anger burned towards her attitude. Verse 2 reads, Genesis 30 verse 2, And Jacob's anger was kindled against Rachel. And he said, Am I in God's stead? Who hath withheld from thee the fruit of the womb?

And he proclaims there, Am I in God's stead? While Rachel focuses on herself, his focus was on God's timing. And Jacob understood that it was God that withheld the blessing of

the fruit of her womb. Is that not a human proclivity that we all suffer from? I personally find myself focusing inward. And that has a place and it's needed to a point. But if you're one who primarily focuses inwardly, then I would submit that we need to spend more time searching, praying, and even fasting for the bigger picture. We all need to understand what it is that God wants us to learn from a given trial.

New Testament to James chapter 1. James chapter 1. And if you want a way to remember it, H.J. Hebrews James. Alphabetical. Easy to find. James chapter 1.

And we'll read verses 2 to 4.

James chapter 1, verses 2 to 4. Verse 2 reads, My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into diverse temptations. Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience, but let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

We likely all have the same experience almost year after year. If you don't have it, you're lucky. That as the spring holy days approach, so do the trials. And we in this age and time

of great uncertainty, we need to be laser focused on the kingdom of God. And the full gospel of Jesus Christ. Back to Rachel. In her humiliation of having not yet given birth to a child of her own. She takes her handmaid Bilhah. And gives Jacob. Gives her to Jacob.

So she can bear children. Verse 3 of Genesis chapter 30. And she said behold my maid Bilhah. Go in unto her and she shall bear upon my knees that I may also have children by her.

And she gave him Bilhah, her handmaid to wife. And Jacob went in unto her and Bilhah conceived and

bare Jacob a son. Verse six. And Rachel said, God hath judged me and hath also heard my voice and

hath given me a son. Therefore she called him Dan. So this is reminiscent of Sarah, right? With Hagar. Taking matters into her own hands. And while the birth of Dan is not the fruit

of her womb. The tide is beginning to turn in Rachel's mind.

Albeit slowly. It's turning in her mind and her heart. And notice that upon Bilhah giving birth. It is Rachel who names the son Dan. And I'm sure that was probably cultural. God hath judged me.

And has also heard my voice and has given me a son. Rachel's beginning to see the hand of God in

all of this, and I believe she's starting to recognize that it was God who was responsible for her being barren. At the same time, her voice and her prayers were heard.

Let's update our birthing count in the birthing Olympics. Leah 4, Bilhah 1, Rachel 0. Isaiah 59, verses 1 and 2.

If you'd turn there, please. Isaiah 59, verses 1 and 2.

Very familiar passage.

Isaiah 59, the first two verses, 1 and 2.

Verse 1 reads, Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear. Verse 2, But your iniquities have separated you, pardon me, between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.

It's not unreasonable to think that God had intentionally held back his blessings in order to bring Rachel to a certain point in her understanding. I purposely did not use the word punishment, although it's entirely likely she may have felt that way. Haven't we all contemplated similar thoughts? God's punishing me. Please turn now to Romans chapter 2 verse 4.

A very, again, well-known scripture, Romans 2.4.

Romans 2.4 reads, I'll give you a second to get there, sorry. I'm trying to go too fast.

It's a bad habit, I have, I admit. So Romans 2.4 reads, Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness in forbearance and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness... God leadeth thee to repentance.

God is now orchestrating repentance in Rachel.

And as Romans 2.4 clearly states, it is the goodness of God that leads a person to repentance. This is not our choice. We don't decide, oh, I think I'll repent today.

The act of repenting and making a change, that part is our choice.

There was a song by Michael Jackson back in 1988. And there are a few lines that accurately describe our approach. And let me add, so no one is misunderstanding, it is impossible to repent without God's help. Without God kick-starting that process and pricking the heart, as Peter said in Acts 2. But to the lyrics of the song, and I won't sing it,

I promise. It says, I'm starting with the man in the mirror. I'm asking him to change his ways. And no message could have been any clearer. If you want to make the world a better place, take a look at yourself and then make a change.

So from pre-COVID even to today, we're all watching what I call the insidious and hateful cancel

culture that is around us. And if you peel away the layers of the onion,

It is the complete antithesis of repentance. Cancer culture ignores sin and blames everyone else for their problems, their sins. And let's call it for what it is,

sin. So instead of looking in the mirror and changing and bettering oneself, it's a race to the bottom to become the lowest common denominator. If someone is blaming others for their actions,

this is a form of gaslighting. and is proof positive that this insanity is from none other than Satan himself. Brethren, we in God's church are called to the highest standard possible,

to emulate the nature and the character of Jesus Christ. This should be our focus daily, and this is an exceptionally tall order. Point number four, another bout of human nature. We can often fool ourselves and think that our conversion is linear

and always progressing on an upward trajectory. Like the investors in the stock market, right? It's the dream that I invest this much and it continues to grow forever.

However, if you've spent any time in the church, you know that is not reality.

With human nature, we all have our issues to overcome. And if you've been, again, at this for a while, you can personally attest that it doesn't always come easy. And in fact, it's easy to slip back into old ways if we're not careful. Well, Leah and Rachel are no different. And their account indicates that there was another flare-up in the rivalry. Let's go back to Genesis chapter 30, please. If you turn back to Genesis chapter 30.

Genesis chapter 30.

And we're going to pick it up in verse 7. Genesis chapter 30 verse 7.

And Bilhah, Rachel's maid, conceived again and bare Jacob a second son. And Rachel said, With great wrestlings have I wrestled with my sister, and I have prevailed.

And she called his name Naphtali, or Naphtali, however you like to say it.

So this is a difficult verse to decipher. Is this Rachel hitting a speed bump?

In the road of carnality? Or is it something different? Notice that she views her interactions with her sister as wrestling or great struggles. And I'm confident they weren't rolling around in the dirt physically wrestling and trying to pin each other to the ground. Yet, there's still a struggle because Rachel's inability to give Jacob a son. In my opinion,

naming your new baby Russell seems a bit odd. Is Naphtali or wrestling where her focus is?

Is it on the newborn baby or is her focus on wrestling? Focused,

I believe, on being a head of her sister. Let's update the count of the birthing Olympics.

Leah 4, Bilhah 2, Rachel 0.

Let's continue in verse 9. And when Leah saw that she had left bearing, she took Zilpah, her maid, and gave her Jacob,

gave her to Jacob, to wife. Verse 10, and Zilpah,

Leah's handmaid, bear Jacob a son. Verse 11,

and Leah said, a troop cometh, and she called his name Gad. Did Leah,

who left bearing, kindle the rivalry more with Zilpah? And when I initially read verse 11, my initial thought was Leah's declaring, game on.

Two can play at that game. Is calling her son Gad a troop cometh,

a way of rubbing salt in the wound for Rachel? A distinct possibility.

Verse 12, in Zilpah, Leah's maid bear Jacob a second son. And Leah said, happy am I, for the daughters will call me blessed.

And she called his name Asher. Leah's definitely blessed with the birth of Asher.

And this is the eighth son.

And what struck me was her focus does not appear on the new son, but on being called blessed.

Verse 14.

Rachel, is it a small matter that thou hast taken my husband?

And wouldest thou take away my son's mandrakes also? And Rachel said,

therefore he shall lie with thee, being Leah, tonight for thy son's mandrakes.

So since the rivalry is still coming in hot, let's update our count once again. Leah 4, Zilpah 2, Bilhah 2, Rachel 0. Rachel's upset.

but wants these mandrakes. Now the Hebrew word for mandrake does nothing to aid in identifying what

it is. What I did find out, and it's interesting, that mandrakes were believed to increase fertility in women. Reuben is bringing the mandrakes to Leah,

so Leah has a plan to try and get pregnant by Jacob again. Rachel, in her bitterness, seems to control the breeding rights of Jacob. As odd as that may sound, but if it's true that the mandrakes increased for... then it makes sense why Rachel was so desperate to eat them.

She was bound and determined to get pregnant but they did not help her at all as she was still barren. Genesis 30 verse 16 And Jacob came out of the field in the evening and Leah went out to

meet him and said thou must come in unto me for surely I have hired thee with my son's mandrakes

and he lay with her that night. Jacob knew the purpose of the mandrakes.

Verse 17, And God hearkened unto Leah, and she conceived and bare Jacob the fifth son.

So God intervened again on behalf of Leah, and she gave birth to her fifth son.

However, he is son number nine out of twelve. Jacob had just seemingly had to sneeze, and Leah was pregnant. She was a fertile myrtle,

as they say.

Verse 18, And Leah said, God hath given me my hire, because I have given my maiden to my husband,

and she called his name Ishikar. So the two root words for Ishikar,

Strong's 5375, combined with Strong's 7939,

so I'll repeat those, 5375. And 7939. So whenever you're searching.

And you see a Strong's word.

And it has root words. Those root words are important. Because they form a better definition.

Of what's being said. It gives the meaning then. That God lifted her up. And gave Leah her wages.

Her higher. In the form of a baby. Verse 19 of Genesis 30.

And Leah conceived again. And bare Jacob the sixth son. Verse 20,

And Leah said, God has endued me with a good dowry. Now will my husband dwell with me, because I have borne him six sons. And she called his name Zebulun.

Verse 21, And afterwards she bare a daughter and called her name Dinah.

Leah's focus was again having Jacob dwell with her. So the logical conclusion, is that Jacob dwelled with Rachel.

The rivalry is still going strong. Leah then conceives again and gives birth to Dinah.

And Dinah's name's not even alluded to here. The name Dinah means justice.

Justice was served. For whom?

Who received justice here? Leah or Rachel or both?

Another updated count. Leah six. And one in brackets for Dinah,

Zilpah 2, Bilhah 2, and Rachel still 0.

Does certain behaviors, attitudes, reactions take longer to overcome?

Why, yes they do. And this is why overcoming takes time to achieve.

As you have likely heard in the past, there is no such thing as deathbed repentance.

In fact, it makes an absolute mockery out of the conversion process.

Our entire lives we are always having to war against our human nature.

The Spirit of God helps us overcome because without it, there is no overcoming.

Point number five.

Did the rift heal? The rift between Leah and Rachel.

Did it heal?

Now to think that these two sisters were bitter enemies over a man. And circumstances not of their

own making. This arrangement not only violates Genesis 2.24.

Where a man shall leave his wife. I mean his mother and father. And cleave unto his wife.

But it also violates Leviticus 18 verse 18. Please turn there.

Leviticus 18 verse 18.

Leviticus 18 verse 18 reads. Neither shalt thou take a wife to her sister to vex her.

To uncover her nakedness besides the other in her lifetime. I think vex is a really accurate description of how Rachel felt for a good ten plus years. As she sat miserably by and watching her

childbearing years slipping away. But God is faithful. And in mercy he brings about the birth of her first child. And no mandrakes were involved. It's God's will.

And it's God's timing. Even though Rachel did her level best. To try to take the wheel.

And drive that bus in her own circumstances. Please turn back again to Genesis chapter 30 please.

And we'll resume in verse 22. Genesis 30 verse 22.

Genesis 30 verse 22 reads. And God remembered Rachel.

And God hearkened. to her and opened her womb and she conceived and bare a son and said God hath

taken away my reproach and she called his name Joseph and said the Lord shall add to me another son

so the prayer of Rachel is finally answered and her womb is opened by God Rachel recognizes the

trial is over and it was done by God With direct intervention.

She gives birth to Joseph. And she knows. That there are to be 12 sons born.

How she knows this. I'm not sure. I can't find a scripture that indicates. That she knew Jacob would have 12 sons. But she knows. A triumphant update.

To our count. Leah 6. Zilpah 2. Bilhah 2. And finally Rachel 1.

Once the birth of Joseph occurs, the rift seems to melt away.

And I say that because it's no longer in the equation. The account progresses when Jacob requests

to go his separate way and start his own life apart from being financially tied or indebted to Laban. They separated, pardon me, three days journey and he begins to multiply his flocks.

Jacob takes the stronger sheep and gives the weaker ones to Laban. This is his way to gain back his

wages and things go south and they go south fast. God intervenes directly and to me this indicates

that God backed Jacob's approach. Turn with me if you would now to Genesis chapter 31. Genesis 31 and we'll start in verse 11. Genesis 31 verse 11 and we'll read to verse 18. of God spake unto me in a dream saying Jacob and I said here I am here am I pardon me and he said

lift up now thine eyes and see all the rams which leap upon the cattle are ring striped speckled and grizzled for I have seen all that Laban doeth unto thee I am the God of Bethel where thou anointed the pillar and where thou vowed vowedest a vow unto me Now arise, get thee out from this land, and return unto the land of thy kindred. And Rachel and Leah answered

and said unto him, Is there yet any portion or inheritance for us in our father's house? Are we not counted of him strangers? For he has sold us, and quite devoured also our money. For all the riches which God has taken, From our father that is ours and our children's. Now then whatsoever God has said unto thee do. So there's a unanimous acknowledgement. That both Leah and Rachel were put in their situation by their father. And Laban for his own gain.

Alienated what are likely his only daughters.

So we come full circle. Not only did Laban create the rift. He also swindled them out of their inheritance.

Point number six. the end of their lives. Leah and Rachel, that is. From Genesis 31 to Genesis 35, they are one family unit.

And they survived the meeting of Esau, where, if you remember, Jacob feared Esau.

What was going to happen when they met? Well, if you pay attention, notice the order that the family goes to meet Esau. Leah and her sons are first. Then Jacob and then Rachel and her son. Sons, pardon me. Or if you count the sons by Bilhah. I believe this is done as Rachel is still the wife. She's the prized possession. So if something went south here, the sons of Leah are first to die. They were the first ones out. Thanks, Dad. Thanks for putting us first and sacrificing us.

Let's fast forward in the story now to Genesis 35 and the birth of the last son of Israel.

The clan was on route. From Bethel and Rachel goes into hard labor. Let's read this starting in Genesis 35 verse 16.

Genesis 35 verse 16. And they journeyed from Bethel.

And there was but a little way to come to Ephrath. And Rachel travailed and she had hard labor. And it came to pass when she was in hard labor that the midwife said unto her, Fear not, thou shalt have this son also. And it came to pass as her soul was in departing, for she died, that she called his name Ben-Oni, son of my sorrow.

But his father called him Benjamin. And Rachel died and was buried in the way of Ephrath, which is Bethlehem. And Jacob set up a pillar upon her grave. That is the pillar of Rachel's grave

unto this day. Our final count in the Birthing Olympics. Leah 6, Zilpah 2, Bilhah 2, and Rachel 2. The 12 sons of Israel are born.

One thing you will never see in scripture is Jacob referred to Leah as his wife.

He appears only to do that with Rachel. However, Leah is buried in the cave of the patriarchs, in the cave of Machpelah. So that means when she's resurrected, she'll be standing next to Sarah and Abraham. Genesis 49, if you turn there, Genesis 49, with the blessings of the 12 sons.

Same chapter anyway. We'll read verse 29. Genesis 49,

verse 29. And he charged them and said unto them,
I am to be gathered unto my people. Bury me with my fathers in the cave that is in the field of Ephron the Hittite. In the cave that is in the field of Machpelah, which is before Mamre in the land of Canaan. Which Abraham bought with the field of Ephron the Hittite for a possession of a burying place. And if you've never stopped and realized, that's the only piece of property that Abraham owned in the promised land. That's all he owned was that cave.

Verse 31. And they buried Abraham and his wife, and Sarah his wife, and they buried Isaac and Rebekah and his wife, and there I buried Leah. Again, Leah will be resurrected next to Abraham and Sarah, her father-in-law and mother-in-law, and Rebekah was her father's sister. End with Jacob.

With the death of Rachel, Jacob would have dwelled with Leah, whom would have been his wife.

Now, point seven. The rift doesn't actually end with the death of Rachel and Leah. There is no explicit statement that that rift was healed. But the absence of it after the birth of Joseph indicates that it went away. While the rift may have been healed between the two sisters, the rift actually carries on and will be in place until the return of Jesus Christ.

Here are a couple examples. Think about the treatment of Joseph.

It was primarily the sons of Leah that conspired against him and sold him into Egypt.

This is an extension or a byproduct of the rivalry between the mothers. In the same way that Jacob

avored Rachel, Jacob also favored Joseph. And this was obviously,

as you've read, a very sore point amongst the other sons. And who could blame them? The rulership

of King Saul, a descendant of Rachel, was cut short by King David,

a descendant of Leah, through whom a dynasty would be established.

Then this rift carries on through the kingships of the northern kingdom and the southern kingdom.

And even today, there's a rift between the Jews and the other tribes, and it will culminate, as we know, with all nations surrounding Jerusalem.

So in conclusion, when we look at the entirety, of the lives of Leah and Rachel, we can see that God took a bitter rivalry and brought them both to repentance.

And at the same time, he orchestrated and furthered his plan of salvation.

The Bible does not describe what level of harmony the two sisters achieved because the life of Rachel was cut short. However, we can see that God used their personalities and their circumstances

to bring about certain events that are significant in his plan. It was Moses,

a descendant of Leah, who God used to redeem the children of Israel from slavery in Egypt.

And it was Joshua, Moses' successor, a descendant of Rachel, who led the children of Israel into the Holy Land. Leah through Judah brought about the birth of the Messiah.

And that will ultimately lead to the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth with the return

of Jesus Christ. Let's conclude with a beautiful statement about these two women.

And it will reveal their role and their importance in God's eyes.

And brethren, at the end of the day, that's all that matters.

Turn with me, if you would, to Ruth. The book of Ruth. Maybe you're familiar with this scripture.

Ruth 4.

Even I'm having trouble remembering. Where did it go? Ruth chapter 4. After Judges.

Verse 4. And brethren this is a beautiful statement. Ruth 4 verse 11.

I'll let you get there.

It reads. Ruth 4 11. And all the people that were in the gate.

And the elders said we are witnesses. The Lord make the woman that is come unto thine house like

Rachel and like Leah, which too did build the house of Israel.

And do thou worthily in Ephratath and be famous in Bethlehem. Leah and Rachel are highly esteemed

for their role and they are solely accredited to building the house of Israel.

What an honor. to have played such a crucial role. And if you've ever read a scripture,

brethren, that doesn't just drive home that point, never ever think women are not important to God.

Have a wonderful remainder of the Sabbath.