

## LOVE

There is human love and there is GOD's Love

The Bible has a remarkable story, starting in Genesis 29, about a woman named Leah who discovered that finding true love was difficult. Leah was the daughter of a wealthy and manipulative man named Laban. Leah also had a sister named Rachel, one of the most beautiful women in the whole region. Leah was described as, "weak in the eyes." We do not know exactly what that phrase means: but beauty wise Leah was not drawing much attention.

One day, Rachel was herding the sheep when a young man named Jacob came to the well. His journey's purpose was to find a wife, so it did not take him long to notice beautiful Rachel approaching. He rolled away the stone over the well, and watered the sheep for her. Learning he was her father's nephew, she ran home to tell Laban the news. Already head-over-heels in love, or call it love-at-first-sight if you wish, Jacob stayed on with Laban. When asked what his wages should be, he immediately asked to marry Rachel. Laban made Jacob an offer. "Work for me, seven years without pay, then I will give you my daughter."

It is starting to sound like a romantic story for the ages! Jacob was in love with her beauty, Jacob was so madly in love that he did not hesitate. Seven years he worked, everyday focused on his prize. One day he would finally be able to marry the woman

of his dreams, Rachel. “Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed to him but a few days because of the love he had for her.”

After seven years of labor, the wedding day finally arrived. The party must have been massive. When night came, Jacob and his new bride, probably wearing her wedding veil, went into their tent.

The next morning Jacob awoke, the Bible says, “and behold it was Leah!” Jacob had been tricked. Laban had switched his daughters on the wedding night and tricked Jacob into marrying his oldest, Leah. Why? Laban wanted another seven years of free labor before he would allow Jacob to actually marry Rachel. Still madly in love with Rachel, Jacob agrees and works another seven years to marry Rachel.

Jacob was willing to submit himself to over a decade of manual labor as an act of love for Rachel whom he considered to be his soulmate. We want desperately to find that kind of love, too. This expression of love is the deepest craving of our heart. But allowing ourselves to be quickly carried off in the ecstasy of the moment misses the real heart of the story for Leah.

Leah had never been able to draw much attention. She had always been the hopeless romantic. But now things were much worse. Leah was married to a man who never for a moment loved her, and manipulated by a father as payment for help around the farm. Leah was not loved by her husband, nor even

her father. She was used and discarded. When she was most vulnerable she was rejected.

What happened next is subtle, but maybe important for us to understand our own struggle with love and rejection. In Leah's first century world, women cared deeply about having children, especially having sons. A father's proudest moment was the birth of his first son. Soon after being married, Jacob wanted a son. Leah saw an opportunity! If she could be the first to give Jacob a son, surely then he would love and appreciate her. Leah must have been excited to find out she was pregnant and even more excited when she gave birth to the family's first son, Reuben.

Now surely her husband would love her.

Leah believed in her heart that God had blessed her with this son so that now her husband would finally love her. But nothing changed. Leah gave birth to a second son, she named him Simeon.

Again she believed God had seen her rejection. Now, surely her husband would love her. But nothing changed. Leah had a third son, who she named Levi. She honestly hoped that now her husband would care for her and love her. But again, nothing changed.

Leah's story teaches us that finding true love could be difficult. True love goes beyond the passion of romance and even finding

a partner for the sake of being married. While romance is important, there is more that we must discover.

Leah's life was controlled by the hope that she could somehow make herself lovable. She was desperate to find a way to earn her husband's attention. Her broken heart and desperation to be loved teaches us a deeply personal truth about our own search for true love. We cannot earn it.

Leah helps us realize that most of what we call love and our search for it is really a need to know that we are valuable enough to be loved in the first place. We want to feel like our life is worth something to someone. We are desperate to be known, not just as a body, but as a being. We want to be accepted. We want to be loved unconditionally.

We all want to be loved and if we are not we are most miserable.

Each of us wants to find a way to open up our hearts and lives and know that in that moment of honesty we will be accepted and not rejected. We all want to be loved and if we are not we are most miserable.

Honestly, true human love has never really been about romance or passion at all. It is about truth and value. It is about acceptance. It is about giving of self and finding peace. It is about discovering a foundation on which we can build our lives and on which we can place our hope and confidence. It is about feeling like we are worth something. It is about sharing lives and in the midst of it, feeling loved unconditionally.

What does the bible say about Human Love?

(1 Cor. 13:1-13)

1 If I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.

4 Love is patient, love is kind, and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, 5 does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, 6 does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; 7 bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. 8 Love never fails;

Then there is God's love.

His love is Unconditional - It is not based on what we can or cannot give; it comes from the heart of God. We can never reach a place when we will not be loved by God! God loved us first, He loved us anyway and He loves us eternally! We are worth something to God.