

Introduction
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1. At my house every Spring and Summer we experience a rather remarkable phenomenon, and we don't quite know how to explain it:
  - a. In the Spring Amy spends a few days prepping her garden boxes in the back yard
  - b. She puts in some new topsoil, mixes it with some ZooBrew compost, maybe some peat moss (?)
  - c. Once everything's prepared, she sticks these tiny green plants in the ground, and then goes out every day to water, tie up the plants as they grow, pull weeds, look for insects, and occasionally shoo away the rabbits
  - d. But then, generally a couple months later, somebody starts sneaking into our backyard every night and filling Amy's boxes with tomatoes, and cucumbers, and herbs like dill, rosemary, and basil; it's crazy!
  - e. Amy loves it, though, because she makes these gigantic salads?
  - f. Me? I keep hoping they'll leave a couple pints of Whit's frozen custard
2. Obviously, no one is sneaking into our backyard and playing vegetable fairy; this is simply one of the laws of God's creation at work:
  - a. We are simply reaping what Amy has sown
  - b. Every Spring she plants a variety of herbs and vegetable plants, and every Summer she reaps exactly what's she's planted
  - c. That's the way it works
3. What's interesting about this principle of sowing and reaping is that it doesn't just apply to farming because the Bible also uses it as a metaphor for life:
  - a. For instance:
    - 1) Proverbs 11:18: **"The wicked earns deceptive wages, but he who sows righteousness gets a true reward."**
    - 2) Job 4:8: **"According to what I have seen, those who plow iniquity and those who sow trouble, harvest it."**
    - 3) Hosea 8:7: **"For they sow the wind and they reap the whirlwind..."**
    - 4) 2 Corinthians 9:6: **"Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully"**
  - b. So, just like in farming, as a general principle in life we reap what we sow:
    - 1) I referred to it as a general principle because obviously we don't always receive something good in this life every time we do good, or receive something bad every time we do something wrong (what's the idiom? No good deed goes unpunished)
    - 2) Likewise, when it comes to God, we know that He doesn't always give us what we deserve (the consequences of our sin), and often times gives us what we don't deserve (mercy and forgiveness)

- 3) But generally speaking, the principle still applies in this life: if we sow righteousness, we generally reap the rewards of that righteousness, but if we sow sin we may very well reap the consequences of that sin
4. We see an example of the latter with Jacob in our passage today when he reaped what he had sown

A. Jacob gets married, but not to whom he expected (READ 29:21-24)
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1. For those of you who might not already be familiar with this story, it's kind of a shocking plot twist
2. Everything we saw in the previous verses suggested everything had gone according to plan:
  - a. Isaac and Rebekah sent Jacob on a mission to Haran to find a wife among the daughters of Laban, Rebekah's brother
  - b. God seemed to guide Jacob to the right field, the right well, the right people, and even directly to the right woman, Rachel
  - c. Laban even rejoiced and welcomed Jacob into his home, agreed to allow him to marry Rachel, and even allowed him to pay off the dowry on the installment plan by working in exchange for Rachel
  - d. So, in v. 1 when Jacob fulfilled his seven years and the day finally came for him to marry Rachel and return home with his new bride; MISSION ACCOMPLISHED!
3. However, that's not what happened:
  - a. Laban gathered all the men of Haran together for a weeklong feast (likely the wedding feast)
  - b. But when evening came and it was time for Laban to bring Rachel to Jacob so they could consummate the marriage, he brings Leah to Jacob instead and he **"went into her"** (17; consummated the marriage)
4. If you're anything like me, you must be wondering why Jacob would consummate the marriage with Leah when he loved Rachel and expected to marry her:
  - a. The answer comes in the next few verses where we discover Laban deceived him, and we'll get to those in a moment
  - b. But it does bring up an obvious question: how could Jacob NOT know it was Leah instead of Rachel?
    - 1) Some suggest that since it was "evening" it may have been pitch black in the tent or room and he therefore couldn't see her very well
    - 2) Others suggest she might have worn a veil and not spoken
    - 3) Some suggest he might have been tipsy or drunk since alcohol was common at feasts (this may be why Laban waited until evening after a day of celebration)
    - 4) None of these are great answers, but whatever the reason for Jacob's ignorance, he unknowingly consummated the marriage with Leah

B. Jacob discovers Laban's deception (READ 29:25-27)
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1. I don't know about any of you, but if I woke up on October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1999 and saw someone else in my bed other than Amy, I would have freaked out and that's precisely what happened to Jacob (RE-READ 29:25)
2. When Jacob woke up and realized what happened, he immediately confronted Laban (29:26):
  - a. He accused Laban of three things (in the form of questions):
    - 1) He accused Laban of wronging him: **"What is this you have done to me?"**:
      - a) We know this is an accusation of wrong doing because the same question is used repeatedly in the OT when accusing others of sin or wrong doing, or even perceived sin or wrong doing
      - b) God asked the same question of Eve after she sinned in the Garden and when He confronted Israel over their sin after they enslaved the inhabitants of Canaan instead of driving them out of the land as He commanded (Genesis 3:13; Judges 2:2)
      - c) Both Pharaoh and King Abimelech asked Abraham the same question after he deceived them about Sarah being his sister (Genesis 12:18; 26:10)
      - d) The same question was asked of Jonah by the sailors after they discovered he was fleeing the LORD out of disobedience
    - 2) He accused Laban of breaking their agreement: **"Was it not for Rachel that I served with you?"**
      - a) The agreement between Laban and Jacob was that Jacob would serve him for seven years in exchange for Rachel, not Leah
      - b) Laban's switcheroo was obviously a violation of that agreement
    - 3) Finally getting to the heart of the matter, he accused Laban of deceiving him: **"Why then have you deceived me?"**
  - b. Each of these things are true—Laban did wrong him, did break their agreement, and did deceive him—but there's a ton of irony in this:
    - 1) Jacob accused Laban of deceiving him when he himself had deceived his own father and brother
    - 2) This is a perfect example of the idiom "the pot calling the kettle black"
    - 3) It's also an example of someone reaping what they've sown: Jacob had sown deception and now reaped deception
    - 4) The deceiver had become the deceived
3. Laban's response to the accusations was to give an excuse and to make Jacob an offer (READ 29:26-27)
  - a. His excuse was that it would have been wrong culturally for him to give Leah in marriage before Rachel (REREAD 29:26):

- 1) Not everyone agrees on whether Laban was being truthful here because there's not much evidence of such a tradition in the ANE at the time, but it seems reasonable since the tradition certainly existed later
  - 2) However, if such a tradition did exist, why did he agree to Jacob's request to marry Rachel and not tell him about the tradition? Why did he resort to deception instead?
  - 3) Something else of interest: Did you notice the words Laban used?
    - He referred to Rachel as the "**younger**" but Leah as the "**firstborn**" rather than the "**older**"
    - There might be some word play here since Jacob the younger son used shrewdness and deception to acquire the birthright and blessing of the firstborn which violated the normal custom, but here Laban used the same tactics to uphold the normal custom of the firstborn daughter
- b. Laban followed his excuse with an offer: he would give Rachel to Jacob as well, but only if Jacob completed the marriage feast with Leah and agreed to work an additional seven years (RE-READ 29:27)

C. Jacob's response to Laban is somewhat remarkable (READ 29:28-30)
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1. Jacob had been tricked by Laban (and likely Leah) so we have to wonder why he didn't just tell the two of them to go pound sand, take Rachel, and head back home to Canaan
2. But, he didn't and instead fulfilled Leah's week (signifying he accepted her as his wife) and then agreed to Laban's terms to serve him for another seven years in exchange for Rachel
3. This is all the more remarkable when we compare it to Esau's reaction when Jacob deceived him

Takeaway
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1. When we have a narrative passage like this it isn't always clear what the point is and what principles or practices we should learn from it
2. However, I can't help but wonder if part of the lesson for Jacob—and for us—is what I've already alluded to: we should be careful what we sow because we reap what we sow
3. We find this principle in the Old Testament, especially for those who continually do wrong:
  - a. Proverbs 22:8: "**He who sows iniquity will reap vanity. And the rod of his fury will perish.**"
  - b. Hosea 10:11-13: "**12 Sow with a view to righteousness, Reap in accordance with kindness; Break up your fallow ground, For it is time to seek the LORD Until He comes to rain righteousness on you. 13 You have plowed wickedness, you have reaped injustice, You have eaten the fruit of lies. Because you have trusted in your way, in your numerous warriors,**"

4. We even find this principle in the New Testament:
  - a. When Paul was writing to the Christians in Galatia about confronting sin, he said this (Galatians 6:7-9): **“Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary.”**
  - b. The principle here is that when we sow to our flesh (e.g. do fleshly things), we reap corruption; but, when we sow to the Spirit, we reap from the Spirit
  - c. This applied to Jacob as much as it does us as Christians, and it should encourage us to do what pleases the LORD and warn us against doing what displeases Him.