

Two Into One • Part 8: Marriage & The Gospel “Just As”

Gen 2:21-25

We'll be in Genesis 29 / For prayer - Ephesians 5:25–27 & 31–32

Ephesians 5

25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her,

26 that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word,

27 that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish...

& 31 “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.”

32 This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

PRAYER

Consider these words “JUST AS” in vs 25

They are repeated several times in Ephesians, not to mention many other places in the NT...

Eph. 4:32 • Forgive, JUST AS God, in Christ, also has forgiven you

Eph. 5:1–2 • Imitate God and walk in love, JUST AS Christ also love you

Eph. 5:25 • Husbands loves your wives, JUST AS Christ also loved the church

These words are at the core of a very powerful approach to ministry and counseling that I heard somewhere = “Don’t give good advice = give the Good News!”

This POWERFUL PRINCIPAL has transformed everything in my ministry!

Instead of trying to give my advice about what to do in a given situation (which is always a huge risky responsibility—knowing how much my words can affect a marriage or a family)...

We simply talk about THE GOSPEL and did into the reality of WHAT JESUS HAS DONE FOR US

And then flip it around with that amazing IDEA of “JUST AS” /

How can we live this out / how can we apply this to our relationship / how would the story change if we imitated what Jesus did for us and how He loves us?

- Put others first, like Jesus took the lowest place in order to save us
- Think of your spouse like Jesus thinks of His Bride
- Speak about others like Jesus speaks His promises and blessings over you
- Don’t blame your spouse, since Jesus doesn’t blame you

- Forgive all your spouse's sins—past, present, and future
- Walk in grace toward others just as Jesus extends grace to you moment by moment / “grace upon grace”

You can keep going! & You can apply this to *any* aspect of life & relationships, not just marriage

So even though this is the last study in our marriage series, realize it is more about Jesus and the Gospel than it is about marriage / this LESSON is for all of us here!

As you've heard many times in this marriage series, God created marriage to be a PICTURE of the Gospel / we read this in our opening text...

& 31 “For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.”

32 This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

But, with those words, “JUST AS” we can also say this: that the GOSPEL is the TEMPLATE for how to have a flourishing and healthy marriage / in fact—any relationship!

So—throughout scripture we see many marriages, each one serves as PICTURE of the Gospel in some way...

Some marriages portray Jesus' love for His Bride in amazing parallels—like Boaz & Ruth, Joseph & Mary, and Hosea & Gomer

Yet, other marriages are an opposite example of the Gospel / you read them and ask, “How would this story be different if it was lived out according to the template of the GOSPEL?”

Let's look at a familiar episode in Genesis from this perspective this morning—yet in this case it is a negative example / a contrast to the Gospel / and we can ask—how would this narrative be different if the characters were living it out “JUST AS” Jesus?

GENESIS 29:15–20 • Jacob & Leah / Here is the story so far...

Gen 28 – Jacob sent to find a bride from his family's people—& escape his bro's murderous rage / goes to “Haran” – family origins

Jacob stumbles upon his cousin / it is love at first sight / and they immediately to go her father looking for permission to get wed /

15 Then Laban said to Jacob, "Because you are my relative, should you therefore serve me for nothing? Tell me, what should your wages be?"

16 Now Laban had two daughters: the name of the elder was Leah, and the name of the younger was Rachel.

17 Leah's eyes were delicate, but Rachel was beautiful of form and appearance.

18 Now Jacob loved Rachel; so he said, "I will serve you seven years for Rachel your younger daughter."

19 And Laban said, "It is better that I give her to you than that I should give her to another man. Stay with me."

20 So Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed only a few days to him because of the love he had for her.

Jacob promises 7 years of labor to Laban to win Rachel's hand... but as we read in verse 20, these 7 years... seemed only a few days to him because of the love he had for her.

Up to this point, we'd say this is one of the great love stories in the Bible—indeed, in all of history! A guy working 7 years in exchange for his wife.

Hey guys / we were told the engagement ring had to cost 2 months wages / I don't know who came up with that—but I'm sure they had shares in a jewelry company!

Jacob, though, puts us all to shame / he invested 7 years as his engagement price for Rachel

But we've overlooked something, or "someone"—there is another sister who is older named "Leah" ...

NKJ says "Leah's eyes were delicate" / a difficult phrase to translate / the NASB says, "Leah's eyes were weak" / probably meaning, "unattractive eyes" or even "she wasn't much to look at" = How sad! Remembered for all eternity as *the girl who wasn't as pretty as her younger sister, and was rejected because of it.*

After the 7 years, Jacob and Rachel are ready to be wed / Laban throws a great wedding feast...

21 Then Jacob said to Laban, "Give me my wife, for my days are fulfilled, that I may go in to her."

22 And Laban gathered together all the men of the place and made a feast.

23 Now it came to pass in the evening, that he took Leah his daughter and brought her to Jacob; and he went in to her.

24 And Laban gave his maid Zilpah to his daughter Leah as a maid.

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

This is one of the creepiest verses in all of scripture / a shocking turn of events / Jacob has been married off to Leah, not Rachel!

Where's Rachel? / Laban must have locked her up somewhere, or sent her on a journey / Maybe she didn't even know the wedding was happening / who knows?

☺ *It actually sounds like a Vegas wedding = waking up the next morning and realizing you are married to a stranger*

Zilpah is going to come into the story later, so this introduces her...

Laban seems to be the big rat in this story / he ripped Jacob off of 7 years of labor / So, Jacob's response seems completely reasonable:

And he said to Laban, "What is this you have done to me? Was it not for Rachel that I served you? Why then have you deceived me?"

26 And Laban said, "It must not be done so in our country, to give the younger before the firstborn."

This sounds like a cold and cavalier response from Laban. He comes across like a heartless tyrant. But, let's not miss a couple of key points...

1—Jacob, the deceiver, just got deceived

What was Jacob's big sin problem in his life? = Deception. Conniving. Subterfuge. Do you think that God was trying to teach Jacob a lesson here? Maybe = you reap what you sow?

This doesn't exonerate Laban, but it might shed some light on what God let Jacob go through this.

2—Jacob tried to violate the rights of the firstborn!

Jacob knew that Leah was the Eldest! He knew the culture insisted the eldest be married off first—to ensure she could be married and have children—since barrenness was considered a curse back then.

Jacob couldn't say—*"Oh, Uncle Laban—I had no idea that the eldest got first priority! How was I supposed to know that you had to take care of the eldest first?"*

Jacob knew this—yet pursued Rachel. For 7 years, you know he was looking around, wondering who would show up and marry Leah.

By the way, this isn't the first time Jacob violated the privileges of the firstborn! He stole the birthright and the blessing from his elder brother Esau!

Even though it was God's plan all along to promote Jacob over Esau, they didn't have to sin in order to see God plan come around. God would have done it regardless!

Yes, Laban was a stinker—but don't excuse Jacob. He is just as bad. And the rest of the story will prove it!

27 Fulfill her week, and we will give you this one also for the service which you will serve with me still another seven years."

28 Then Jacob did so and fulfilled her week. So he gave him his daughter Rachel as wife also.

29 And Laban gave his maid Bilhah to his daughter Rachel as a maid.

Jacob had a one-week honeymoon with Leah / and then immediately married Rachel / for which he was committing to *another seven years* of labor.

At this point, you might have a sense of relief: *Okay. Got that straightened out. He and Rachel are married. Now Jacob has ended up with the love of his life. Great story...*

Not so fast / Leah ends up miserable in this relationship / she was the third-wheel and the consolation prize / this marriage was a terrible deal for her!

Think about what just happened / if Jacob woke up the morning after the wedding with the wrong girl—why didn't he annul the marriage / get out of it based on fraud and deception? = Because—in order to marry Rachel, Leah had to be married / so to get what he really wanted, Jacob kept Leah as a wife

Basically—he used her to get what he really wanted / using another person for his own gain / does this sound at all like the sacrificial love of Jesus?

30 Then Jacob also went in to Rachel, and he also loved Rachel more than Leah.

Uh oh—Jacob is playing FAVORITES / he must not have remembered the trouble favoritism played in his family / as his dad favored Esau, but his mother favored him / and the tragic consequences of this

And he served with Laban still another seven years.

31 When the LORD saw that Leah was unloved, He opened her womb; but Rachel was barren.

This is a BIG problem. Leah was UNLOVED. A woman in the family line of Abraham to Jesus / a patriarch's wife / a covenant woman / this is just wrong!

& God noticed = Leah was given fertility / Leah has a bunch of sons for Jacob / Leah is so desperate for her husband's heart she names each one in response to Jacob's neglect...

"Reuben" / God has seen me, because my husband hasn't
"Simeon" / God has heard me, because my husband hasn't

“Levi” / Surely now my husband’s heart will be attached to mine
“Judah” / Oh, to heck with my husband—I’m just going to praise God

And, as a result of Leah’s fertility, Rachel gets so desperate for children, she uses her maid as a surrogate mother and Jacob has children through her / then Leah does the same to get the upper hand, and gives her maid to Jacob as well

And right about now, you start to think, “*Dang, Jacob, what kind of dude are you?*” /
☺ *You know that term, “do you take so and so as your “awfully wedded husband?” This is where that term came from!*

Jacob and Leah, Rachel, Bilhah, and Zilpah is one of the LEAST Gospel-like marriage stories in the OT...

Let’s rewind & look at this story again, but from another PERSPECTIVE to learn a critical lesson / how this story could have been told, if Jacob was EXEMPLIFYING JESUS CHRIST

- *Jacob would have chosen to love Leah, in spite of her unloveliness*
- *Jacob would have chosen to see Leah through the eyes of grace*
- *Jacob would have given everything he had to Leah—even laying down his life for her.*
- *Jacob would have pledged never to leave or forsake Leah.*
- *Instead of Leah being lonely and heartbroken, she would have had a deep intimacy with her husband that would have given her abundant life.*

Now—here is the CLINCHER → When Jesus first came into our lives, we were like LEAH

Because of our sin, we had no beauty to attract us to God
We were VERY WEAK and UNATTRACTIVE in God’s eyes
And because of sin, we don’t aren’t fit for a relationship with God

And yet, God *chose* to love us anyway

Yet—Jesus’ eyes are not like Jacobs’ / Jesus doesn’t see a Leah when He looks at us / he sees a Rachel!

& God never *thinks* of us as a Jacob’s Leah. He thinks better of us.

When God looked at us through the tender eyes of grace and mercy, He saw something else in us—the GOODNESS and BEAUTY of His Son, Jesus.

He sees us as holy and blameless / a spotless, pure and glorious BRIDE / His inheritance & His treasure

Which means = our worth to God is never based on our work or performance. Our worth is only based on God's extravagant grace lavished upon us.

And pretty soon, we BECOME in reality what God thinks about us in Jesus!

His love transforms us and makes us beautiful. From glory to glory we begin to radiate His beauty more and more.

His transforming love makes us into RACHELS / He will see us as a Perfect Rachel / but not the Rachel from Jacob's story, of course, who ended up just as miserable as Leah—but rather, Jesus' BRIDE, who radiates His glory and image...

We are becoming more and more like Jesus. We are being conformed to His image. He is transforming us from glory to glory to reflect His image! And the Bible promises that God will perfect the work He began in us.

You see, the way Jacob failed to love his bride Leah is exactly UNLIKE the way Jesus' loved His Bride, the church—you and I. Jacob was an OPPOSITE example of Jesus' love.

I want to close with a final thought about marriage & other close relationships this morning...

In our marriage study at CCO, we started with the question—What is the Purpose & Goal of marriage. / Purpose = to solve the problem of loneliness / From Genesis 2... in the Garden / not good for Adam to be alone

Why? / many reasons / here's one idea...

Alone on mountain top / like a solitary monk / "great guy / not selfish / or greedy / a jerk / lustful / never angry / so patient / pretty cool dude

Then taken off mtn / put in a relationship / "*Gee, I have a problem with selfishness. And Greed. And being angry with people. And impatient. And lustful. And jealous.*"

God puts us into relationships because this is where our sin is best revealed & discovered! And then, we can turn to Him for transformation and victory.

You see, people come to me and say, "Our marriage is broken. It isn't working. / When actually, it is working just fine. It is doing exactly what God intended.

Jacob and Leah surely thought after their horrible honeymoon, that their marriage would never work out / that it was broken and beyond fixing... yet, we know that living out of God's love, it could have been so much more!

I share this to say—if there is trouble in your marriage, this is an OPPORTUNITY for greatness / The KEY is how to RESPOND when there is conflict and

→ Go to the GOSPEL

What did Jesus do to win His Bride? → He died on the Cross for us

Jesus sacrificed and became the servant of all in order to have a relationship with us—do you think it was worth it to Him?

OF COURSE! Would He do it again? OF COURSE? Aren't you glad He suffered and died for you? OF COURSE!

In the same way, Jesus invites us to take up our cross and follow Him / and Galatians says "I have been crucified with Christ and it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me"

As Jesus died to win a Bride, we must die to OURSELVES to be in right relationships! / it is worth it to sacrifice our selfish desires and sins in order to be in right relationship with our spouse, our family, and friends...

What is the KEY? Simply this = Do "JUST AS" Jesus / imitate Him toward others...

Which means—you have to know Jesus! You need to study Him! You need to be so familiar with nature and character of Jesus that HIS GOSPEL becomes YOUR TEMPLATE.

I invite you—go deeper. It is time to grow. Read your Bible daily. Come to Bible study regularly. Come on Wednesday nights. Get into small group Bible studies. Make KNOWING JESUS your KEY PRIORITY.