

# LEAH – A TRUE FRIEND OF GOD

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## INTRODUCTION

Today I am going to speak about Leah who was a woman in the Bible who realigned her life. As you look at Leah's life you can see there are milestones in her life, where she started to realign her life from how it was initially, to where the Lord had called her to be. This is a great story about how she became a friend of God and a friend of people as well.

The story of Leah begins in Genesis 29. Verse 31 says that the Lord saw that Leah was unloved - it wasn't just what she felt, she actually was unloved. She wasn't loved by her father, she wasn't loved by her husband and she wasn't loved by her sister. Even the name Leah - it actually means 'cow'. It also means 'practical and competent' - which, probably, are not the sorts of things I'd like my name to mean!

Rachel on the other hand means 'lamb' and means 'lights up a room'. We can see the comparison between Rachel and Leah. The only description given in the Bible about Leah is that she had weak eyes. She had some sort of sight impediment and her relationships also were difficult. Her father had to trick someone into marrying her.

You can think of stories where a young girl starts saying, 'No one will love me, no one will marry me', however dad always says, or grandpa says, 'Oh you know the Lord loves you and I love you and you are just wonderful and just be patient.' Laban doesn't say any of that! Laban thinks, 'Yes, you're right! No one is going to marry you and I am going to have to trick someone into doing it!' (It's not a very encouraging way to start life!)

We can, at times, feel rejected and a bit unloved or friendless. I think Leah was friendless, but I think about the Scripture in Proverbs 24:16, 'For a righteous man may fall seven times, and rise again, but the wicked shall fall by calamity.'

## We are going to fall

When we are going through times of rejection or feeling friendless or feeling unloved or insecure, just think of this verse. It's so encouraging to know that we *are* going to fall and that's not a failure. What is the failure in our life is if we fail to get up again.

## Get up and keep going

The number 'seven' always speaks of fullness, so this is saying when we fall we will always get up and keep going. If we're not getting up, we are called wicked and we will fall by calamity. If we are feeling this way today, we need to be getting up and getting on with the things the Lord has called us to do.

A milestone in Leah's life was when her first son, Rueben, was born. Leah said, "The Lord has surely looked on my affliction. Now therefore, my husband will love me."<sup>1</sup> She thought, now everything will be okay; I've done the acceptable thing. It was very important to produce a son and heir, especially at that time, and she had done that and now her husband would love her. The cry in her heart was to feel loved.

I know that I can think this way - that if I do the right thing I will be accepted; the Lord will accept me if I do the right thing. This is where we are starting with Leah; this is often where we start in our own life.

## Wrestle with God

The next milestone for her is when her second son, Simeon, is born and she says, "Because the Lord has heard that I am unloved He has therefore given me this son."<sup>2</sup> She knows the Lord has heard her. As she's feeling unloved, unfulfilled and insecure, she presses in to know the Lord. She doesn't 'sit in a corner and suck her thumb', not doing anything, not doing her devotions - she presses in to know the Lord. Just as Jacob had wrestled with God to find a change of nature in his life, I believe Leah does the same here. She presses in and wrestles with God to see a change in her life.

There is a call here to us that we would wrestle with the Lord for a change of nature in ourselves, rather than seek a change of circumstances. This is where I think Leah started to see something real in her life - rather than look for her husband to love her, she started to look for a change in herself.

<sup>1</sup> Gen 29:32

<sup>2</sup> Gen 29:33

## **I will stand here**

The next son born to Leah is Levi and she says, "Now this time my husband will become attached to me."<sup>3</sup> I love that view - she's given up on demanding that the Lord make her husband love her. She becomes more accepting of who she is and of her circumstances. She's in a loveless marriage; Jacob only loves Rachel; she was tricked into this relationship - things are pretty grim, but she accepts that this is the Lord's hand to her. She changes to thinking, 'Now maybe, my husband will become attached to me which would be great, but there's a pretty good chance that he won't love me; there's a pretty good chance that circumstances aren't going to change - but I will stand here.'

## **Fearfully and wonderfully made**

She began to accept who she was. That is often the turmoil we all go through - not accepting who the Lord has made us to be. Psalm 139:14 says, 'I am fearfully and wonderfully made.' I think that this is what Leah came to. Despite being unloved by a lot of people and being fairly competent and practical and her name meaning 'cow', she came to the point where she knew she was fearfully and wonderfully made.

The next milestone that I really love is where Judah is born and she says in verse 35, "Now I will praise the Lord!" She comes to this point where she is now going to praise the Lord. She's not going to worry about feeling unloved, unfulfilled. She's not worried about the fact she is not the favourite. She is not going to worry what her circumstances are. She praises the Lord!

## **Loved by the Lord**

Can we be encouraged here - no longer looking for circumstances to make us feel secure, to make us feel happy, to make us feel accepted because we *are* accepted in the Lord. I *am* loved by the Lord and the circumstances that He brings to me are His hand to me.

Genesis 30:13 is the next milestone in her life. She says here, "I am happy, for the daughters will call me blessed." She has now found true happiness - her sisters, her maid, or her friends, as I like to call them - call her blessed.

Why did her sisters start to call her blessed? She had already sent her maid in to bear fruit with her husband; she had already seen something of what it means to see her sisters, or her friends, become fruitful. Now that's not customary today, but her heart, her desire, was to see her sisters promoted, for her sisters to find a pathway and to be fruitful.

That's how I can be a true friend - by not being constricted by my own sense of unworthiness. You cannot lay down your life for somebody else if you feel unworthy. To be a true friend you need to be able honour and encourage others.

## **Fruitfulness was her reward**

I love this verse - in Genesis 30: 18, 'Leah said, "God has given me my wages [or reward] because I have given my maid to my husband".' Here she received her reward - she was no longer seeking for a good outcome, for acceptance from Jacob or even her children. What she was looking for was the fruitfulness of her household and to see a line, an inheritance for Jacob, by the way of her maids and by the way of herself.

It's interesting to note that Judah, as we all know, was a kingly line and went on to produce King David and Jesus himself. Here we have Leah bearing fruit that was everlasting.

Leah started out insecure and unloved, but she broke the bondages of her insecurities by hearing from the Lord and praising Him. For us, that means the secret place. We need to be pressing in every day to meet the Lord in the secret place. Leah emptied herself of all her hopes and dreams and accepted God's portion for her.

## **I will praise the Lord!**

I'm sure when she was growing up that Leah had visions of a 'knight in shining armour' coming and finding her. For many of us, life probably hasn't turned out like we thought it would. I think we all have had hopes and dreams but we must empty ourselves of all that and say, 'This is where the Lord has put me. This is the Lord's hand to me. This is His life for me and I will praise Him!'

## **Rejoice to see another bear fruit**

Leah drew near to her friends. I love that! Often when we are insecure and we are feeling things are going pretty badly, the first thing we do is withdraw. To me, that is one of the great tools of Satan. I'm not very much into giving Satan accolades, but this is one of his best tools - that when things are going badly or we're feeling that

<sup>3</sup> Gen 29:34

we have fallen and are not able to get up, we withdraw from friends around us. Leah didn't - she actually drew closer to her friends and she sought to find how these friends could bear fruit and she rejoiced when they did.

Whether you are struggling, doing well, doing badly, the word is still going to come, no matter what our heart is like. We can choose to be obedient and see our lives and our relationships transformed, like Leah did, or we can continue to assess and measure according to our own needs and our own insecurities.

## **Trust and obey**

Leah found life and transformation as she sought the Lord. I'd like to encourage everyone here today to seek the Lord in the secret place - to praise and thank Him for how He has made you and the circumstances in which He has placed you. Even if your circumstances are a result of your own folly, the Lord can embrace all that and hand back to you what you need to suffer. We can trust the Lord and be obedient and listening to His word for us.

Seek out friends who watch over you and care for you and when you mess up, get up! This is my new motto: 'When I mess up, get up!' Keep making offering!

## **Friend of God**

I would like to finish by saying that being a friend and having friends is in the very heart of God. In Exodus it says that God spoke with Moses face to face as one speaks with a friend<sup>6</sup>. God had friends. God had best friends. James tells us that Abraham was a friend of God<sup>7</sup>.

Leah sought the Lord and became a true friend. She became a true friend of God and she became a true friend to those around her. Be encouraged by this account of Leah's life and go and do likewise!

<sup>6</sup> Exodus 33:11

<sup>7</sup> James 2:23