

# Small Group Homework

For the week of March 5, 2017

## GETTING STARTED

What is your favorite game to play?

## LOOKING BACK

Looking back on Sunday, is there anything that stood out to you, confused you, or challenged you?

## MY STORY

1. How competitive are you?
  
2. Competition requires us to measure ourselves against others. When is that helpful? In what ways can it be harmful?

## DIGGING DEEPER

Read Genesis 29:20 (NLT): **So Jacob worked seven years to pay for Rachel. But his love for her was so strong that it seemed to him but a few days.**

“Paying” for Rachel might seem strange to us, but Jacob’s agreement with Laban (Rachel’s dad) looks consistent with cultural arrangements at that time. A groom would pay a bride price, and the bride’s family would respond by paying a dowry (resources the bride could live on if her husband died). We find out later though that Laban didn’t even provide a dowry, so Rachel and Leah did feel like they were being sold like chattel by their father (Genesis 31:14-16).

1. How might Laban’s treatment of his daughters affect them? (See <https://ifstudies.org/blog/how-dads-affect-their-daughters-into-adulthood/> for some modern father-daughter info.)
  
2. Seven years is a long time! What kinds of goals do we set today that require the kind of long-term commitment like Jacob showed?
  
3. Jacob worked for seven years because he had fallen in love with Rachel. His father Isaac on the other hand didn’t have time to fall in love; he had barely met Rebekah before they were married. In what ways is love a feeling we follow, and in what ways is love a decision we make?

Read Genesis 29:22-23,25 (NLT): <sup>22</sup> So Laban invited everyone in the neighborhood and prepared a wedding feast. <sup>23</sup> But that night, when it was dark, Laban took Leah to Jacob, and he slept with her. ...<sup>25</sup> But when Jacob woke up in the morning—it was Leah! “What have you done to me?” Jacob raged at Laban. “I worked seven years for Rachel! Why have you tricked me?”<sup>26</sup> “It’s not our custom here to marry off a younger daughter ahead of the firstborn,” Laban replied. <sup>27</sup> “But wait until the bridal week is over, then we’ll give you Rachel, too—provided you promise to work another seven years for me.”<sup>28</sup> So Jacob agreed to work seven more years. A week after Jacob had married Leah, Laban gave him Rachel, too.

1. Even though Laban had tricked Jacob, Jacob went on to hold up his end of their agreement, working 14 years for Laban. What other options might Jacob have had?
2. Sometimes we feel like we have every right to be bitter towards someone who has wronged us. What are some reasons we might want/need to let go of bitterness?
3. It has been said that holding onto a grudge is like drinking poison and waiting for the other person to die. How does being a disciple of Jesus help us let go of bitterness?

Read Genesis 29:34-35 (NLT): **Then [Leah] became pregnant a third time and gave birth to another son. She named him Levi [which means “feeling affection for”], for she said, “Surely this time my husband will feel affection for me, since I have given him three sons!” Once again Leah became pregnant and gave birth to another son. She named him Judah [which means “praise”], for she said, “Now I will praise the LORD!” And then she stopped having children.**

1. Leah and Rachel were bitter rivals. So were Jacob and his brother Esau. In fact, sibling rivalry is a theme that goes all the way back to Cain and Abel (Genesis 4) and continues through Jesus’ own brothers. Why do you think siblings fight with each other? (See what the experts say here <http://kidshealth.org/en/parents/sibling-rivalry.html>)
2. Much of what we read about Leah involves her trying to earn Jacob’s love. There is no evidence that she ever succeeded. With the birth of Judah we see a bright point: Leah praises the Lord. What can we learn from Leah’s story?

**BRINGING IT HOME:** There is a lot to be concerned about when we look at families in America today. At the same time, family problems are nothing new. We see that even in the lineage of Jesus, God worked in and through some dysfunctional situations. One day He will set everything right.

**PRAYERS:**