

# WHEN FAMILIES FIGHT

## Gen 31

### 1. The REASONS families fight.

#### 1.1. SIBLING RIVALRY

*v1 Jacob heard that Laban's sons were saying, "Jacob has taken everything our father owned and has gained all this wealth from what belonged to our father."*

If you can't say something nice, EVEN IF IT IS TRUE, don't say it!!

#### 1.2. IN-LAW PROBLEMS

*v2 And Jacob noticed that Laban's attitude toward him was not what it had been.*

They say Adam and Eve had the perfect marriage. She didn't have to hear about how well his mother cooked and didn't have to hear about all the boys she could have married instead of him. With so many jokes about in-law's, are we not preprogrammed into believing that these relationships never work out. We should rather be grateful to our in-laws for raising the person we chose to marry.

#### 1.3. UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS

*v6 You know that I've worked for your father with all my strength, v7 yet your father has cheated me by changing my wages ten times. However, God has not allowed him to harm me.*

The greatest cause of broken relationships revolves around "EXPECTATIONS". We often have unrealistic or unclear expectations in our relationship.

#### 1.4. INHERITANCE OR FINANCE ISSUES

*v14 Then Rachel and Leah replied, "Do we still have any share in the inheritance of our father's estate? v15 Does he not regard us as foreigners? Not only has he sold us, but he has used up what was paid for us. v16 Surely all the wealth that God took away from our father belongs to us and our children. So do whatever God has told you."*

Most families fight about MONEY. Either too much or too little. Money should only be a tool to achieve relationship GOALS.

In terms of INHERITANCES. Inheritances never belonged to you in the first place. Don't fight about a decision that you had no control over.

#### 1.5. RELIGIOUS BELIEFS

*v19 When Laban had gone to shear his sheep, Rachel stole her father's household gods. v20 Moreover, Jacob deceived Laban the Aramean by not telling him he was running away. v21 So he fled with all he had, and crossing the River, he headed for the hill country of Gilead. .... v25 Jacob had pitched his tent in the hill country of Gilead when Laban overtook him, and Laban and his relatives camped there too. v26 Then Laban said to Jacob, "What have you done? You've deceived me, and you've carried off my daughters like captives in war. .... ' v30 Now you have gone off because you longed to return to your father's house. **But why did you steal my gods?"***

Religious beliefs have often been a source of tension in families. Jacob and Laban certainly had a different perspective. Even though Rachel was the wife of Jacob, she still clung to the religious practices of her father.

What can we do in trying to deal with differences?

- i. Do all you can to teach matters of faith, while "under your roof."
- ii. Like God gives us freedom to choose, we should do the same.
- iii. Respect the person but don't surrender your faith.
- iv. "Under your roof" maintain your practices.
- v. Ensure that you are practicing what you preach.

#### 1.6. CONTROLLING PEOPLE

*v31 Jacob answered Laban, "I was afraid, because I thought you would take your daughters away from me by force. v32 But if you find anyone who has your gods, he shall not live. In the presence of our relatives, see for yourself whether there is anything of yours here with me; and if so, take it." Now Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen the gods. v33 So Laban went into Jacob's tent and into Leah's tent and into the tent of the two maidservants, but he found nothing. After he came out of Leah's tent, he entered Rachel's tent. v34 Now Rachel had taken the household gods and put them inside her camel's saddle and was sitting on them. Laban searched through everything in the tent but found nothing. v35 Rachel said to her father, "Don't be angry, my lord, that I cannot stand up in your presence; I'm having my period." So he searched but could not find the household gods. v36 Jacob was angry and took Laban to task. "What is my crime?" he asked Laban. "What sin have I committed that you hunt me down? v37 Now that you have searched through all my goods, what have you found that belongs to your household? Put it here in front of your relatives and mine, and let them judge between the two of us. v38 "I have been with you for twenty years now. Your sheep and goats have not miscarried, nor have I eaten rams from your flocks. v39 I did not bring you animals torn by wild beasts; I bore the loss myself. And you*

*demanded payment from me for whatever was stolen by day or night. v40 This was my situation: The heat consumed me in the daytime and the cold at night, and sleep fled from my eyes. v41 It was like this for the twenty years I was in your household. I worked for you fourteen years for your two daughters and six years for your flocks, and you changed my wages ten times. v42 If the God of my father, the God of Abraham and the Fear of Isaac, had not been with me, you would surely have sent me away empty-handed. But God has seen my hardship and the toil of my hands, and last night he rebuked you." v43 Laban answered Jacob, "The women are my daughters, the children are my children, and the flocks are my flocks. All you see is mine. Yet what can I do today about these daughters of mine, or about the children they have borne?*

There are Narcissistic, Self-Centred people in every family. Many relationship are destroyed by people who always feel the need to be "IN CONTROL". At the root of Self-Centred people is the "I" in SIN.

## **2. How to RESTORE fighting families.**

### **2.1.COMMUNICATION**

*v17 Then Jacob put his children and his wives on camels, v18 and he drove all his livestock ahead of him, along with all the goods he had accumulated in Paddan Aram, to go to his father Isaac in the land of Canaan. v19 When Laban had gone to shear his sheep, Rachel stole her father's household gods. v20 Moreover, Jacob deceived Laban the Aramean by not telling him he was running away. v21 So he fled with all he had, and crossing the River, he headed for the hill country of Gilead. v22 On the third day Laban was told that Jacob had fled. v23 Taking his relatives with him, he pursued Jacob for seven days and caught up with him in the hill country of Gilead. v24 Then God came to Laban the Aramean in a dream at night and said to him, "Be careful not to say anything to Jacob, either good or bad." v25 Jacob had pitched his tent in the hill country of Gilead when Laban overtook him, and Laban and his relatives camped there too. v26 Then Laban said to Jacob, "What have you done? You've deceived me, and you've carried off my daughters like captives in war. v27 Why did you run off secretly and deceive me? Why didn't you tell me, so I could send you away with joy and singing to the music of tambourines and harps?*

*v31 Jacob answered Laban, "I was afraid, because I thought you would take your daughters away from me by force*

When Jacob felt threatened, HE RAN AWAY. We all avoid confrontation. We need better Levels of communication:

- i. STYLISED - Like greetings. Talking about the weather.
- ii. DATA REPORTING - Offering or Gathering facts
- iii. EXPRESSING OPINIONS - I Think or I Believe
- iv. SHARING FEELINGS - "That really HURT ME!"

### **2.2.COVENANT**

*v44 Come now, let's make a covenant, you and I, and let it serve as a witness between us." v45 So Jacob took a stone and set it up as a pillar. v46 He said to his relatives, "Gather some stones." So they took stones and piled them in a heap, and they ate there by the heap. v47 Laban called it Jegar Sahadutha, and Jacob called it Galeed. v48 Laban said, "This heap is a witness between you and me today." That is why it was called Galeed. v49 It was also called Mizpah, because he said, "May the LORD keep watch between you and me when we are away from each other. v50 If you mistreat my daughters or if you take any wives besides my daughters, even though no one is with us, remember that God is a witness between you and me." v51 Laban also said to Jacob, "Here is this heap, and here is this pillar I have set up between you and me. v52 This heap is a witness, and this pillar is a witness, that I will not go past this heap to your side to harm you and that you will not go past this heap and pillar to my side to harm me. v53 May the God of Abraham and the God of Nahor, the God of their father, judge between us." So Jacob took an oath in the name of the Fear of his father Isaac.*

HOW SERIOUSLY DO WE HONOUR OUR PROMISES?

### **2.3.COMMUNITY**

*v46 He said to his relatives, "Gather some stones." So they took stones and piled them in a heap, **and they ate there by the heap.** v47 Laban called it Jegar Sahadutha, and Jacob called it Galeed. .... v54 He offered a sacrifice there in the hill country and **invited his relatives to a meal.** After they had eaten, they spent the night there. v55 Early the next morning Laban kissed his grandchildren and his daughters and blessed them. Then he left and returned home*

Families that PRAY together, STAY together. BUT ALSO Families that PLAY together, STAY together.

### **Conclusion**

***Ephesians 2:14 For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility,***

JESUS CAME TO:

1. Open lines of COMMUNICATION between God and people
2. Invite us to be part of a NEW COVENANT
3. Tell us about a COMMUNITY called THE CHURCH