

As we turn to chapter 30, we see that Rachel, still barren, envied Leah for her many children. She told Jacob to give her children or else she would die. Jacob became angry and told Rachel that he wasn't God. So, Rachel gave her maid Bilhah to Jacob, hoping that she could have children through Bilhah. Sure enough, Bilhah soon bore a son, whom Rachel named Dan because God had judged her. Bilhah later had a second son, whom Rachel named Naphtali, because she had wrestled with her sister.

Leah stopped bearing children, so she gave her maid Zilpah to Jacob as a wife. Zilpah bore Jacob two sons, Gad ("Good fortune") and Asher ("Happy am I!").

During the wheat harvest, Reuben brought his mother, Leah, some mandrakes. Rachel asked Leah for some of the mandrakes, but Leah refused, saying it was bad enough that Rachel had taken away Leah's husband. So Rachel offered to let Jacob sleep with Leah that night in exchange for the mandrakes. Leah agreed, and that night she conceived another son, whom she named Issachar. Next, she bore a son named Zebulun ("now my husband will honor me"), and finally, a daughter named Dinah.

Finally, God remembered Rachel, and Rachel conceived at last. She named her son Joseph, saying, "May the LORD add to me another son."

As emphasized elsewhere in Genesis, God is seen as the one who opens or closes a woman's womb. Like Sarah, Rachel took her barrenness into her own hands and used indirect means to have a child, having her husband sleep with her servant. In a culture in which childbearing was a sign of divine blessing, Rachel felt her barrenness to be a source of personal shame, and she went to great lengths to rectify that shame.

As people we struggle with belief. When unbelief turns into unrest, we often take matters into our own hands and try to achieve an outcome by our own means. This is the heart of compromise and always leads to brokenness. Waiting on God is an important part of our spiritual growth. In fact, most spiritual maturity is rooted in waiting rather than doing. In moments like this, we need to pause and question our motives. What is my behavior saying about my belief? Is God good? Is God great? Simple questions can help prevent complex problems!

GENERAL PRAYER REQUESTS

We are so grateful for the generosity of the Grace family. Pray that all the gifts that were given in November and December would be a blessing to those that received them. Pray that this would build relationships between Grace and our community partners.

Pray for our coming services this Friday at 1pm, 3pm, and 5pm. Pray that God would use us to reach our community in this Christmas celebration. Pray for the staff and their teams as they hold services. Pray that they would have the opportunity to enjoy the celebration amid the planning and preparation.

Pray for our elder team: Bryan Meyers, Cory Trento, Dan Beadle, Dennis Landers, Jim Richards, and Pat Henson. As they wrap up 2021, pray that God would give them rest as they prepare for 2022. We are going through a strategic planning process in the coming year. Pray that God would grant them vision.

Pray for our management team. We finished 2021 in an extremely healthy position. We are blessed with a team of great leaders that collaborate with our Director of Operations, Jacob MacKell. Pray that God would prepare them as they train new team members in the coming season to join their team.

Pray for our staff. Grace is blessed with an incredible team of leaders. Pray that God would give them rest over the holiday break and that the time between Christmas and New Years would give them rest and room for a reset. Pray for God's anointing upon them in the coming year as they lead us into 2022!