

Blessed

SESSION 6

Genesis 30:25-34,41-43

Memory Verse: Genesis 30:30

God is faithful to bless His people.

Thomas O. Chisholm was born in 1866 near Franklin, Kentucky. Because of health problems, he alternated between periods of gainful employment and times of illness. Over time, he worked in the fields of teaching, journalism, insurance, and evangelism. Through all his ups and downs, though, Thomas focused on the new blessings he received from the Lord each morning, which is why he based the words of his timeless hymn “Great Is Thy Faithfulness” on Lamentations 3:22-23: “Because of the LORD’s faithful love we do not perish, for his mercies never end. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness!”

The patriarch Jacob experienced spiritual highs and lows, as well. Through those experiences, he learned that the Lord is always faithful. As you prepare for this session, thank God for the ups and downs in your life and for how He has been faithful to you in every circumstance. Pray for ways you can help the adults in your group recognize God’s goodness at every step of life.



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What do you mean when you say to someone, “God bless you”? The idea of blessing is a major theme in the book of Genesis. It means to bestow favor or to fill with benefits. Often, God’s blessing was bestowed upon people not only to be a blessing to them, but for God to use them to be a blessing to others. It is important to remember that God is faithful to bless His people, and that one of the reasons He does is so that they also may be a blessing to others. (PSG, p. 55)

How has God been faithful to bless you? How do you think He wants to bless others through you?



Understand the Context (Genesis 29:1–31:55)

In Genesis 28, Jacob was forced to leave home because he had stolen the patriarchal blessing that should have gone to his older twin Esau. On his journey to Paddan-aram (or Syria), Jacob encountered the Lord at Bethel. In that revelation the Lord had promised to be with Jacob wherever he went and to bring him back to his homeland (Gen. 28).

After resuming his journey, Jacob arrived in Paddan-aram. There at a well, he met Rachel, who was shepherding the flocks of her father, Laban. Jacob stayed with Laban and agreed to work seven years for Rachel. After the wedding celebration, though, Jacob discovered that Laban had given him his older daughter, Leah, instead. The patriarch was reaping the deception he had sown.

Jacob then agreed to work another seven years for the right to marry Rachel. Leah bore Jacob six sons—Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun—as well as a daughter named Dinah. Meanwhile, Rachel was unable to conceive.

Jacob also had four sons by the maids of Leah and Rachel. Rachel’s maid, Bilhah, bore Dan and Naphtali, while Leah’s maid, Zilpah, bore Gad and Asher. Finally, God “remembered” Rachel, and she bore Jacob a son. She named him Joseph, which means “adding” (Gen. 29:1–30:24). These eleven sons along with Benjamin (Rachel’s younger son who was born after the family returned to Canaan) formed the basis of the twelve tribes of Israel.

The longer Jacob stayed in Aram, the more God blessed him and multiplied his flocks (30:25–43). He

worked for Laban a total of twenty years—fourteen years for his wives and another six years for his flocks. During that time, Jacob had become wealthy far beyond his expectations—and much of his wealth came at the expense of Laban.

Eventually, Jacob realized that Laban’s attitude toward him had changed. Despite the fact that Laban had cheated Jacob and had changed his wages on numerous occasions, the Lord had kept the promise He made at Bethel. He had been with Jacob, protected him, and blessed him.

After two decades, God was ready to fulfill the final part of the promise, as He told Jacob to return to his homeland (31:13). The patriarch deceptively fled with his family, herds, and possessions. Laban overtook him in the hill country of Gilead, and the two men made a covenant at Galeed or Mizpah.

After blessing his grandchildren and daughters, Laban returned home. Meanwhile, Jacob turned his attention to Canaan and facing the brother who had threatened to kill him twenty years earlier.

Read Genesis 30:25–34,41–43. How do these verses add to your understanding of the ways that God’s faithfulness to His people impacts their thinking and their lives? (PSG, p. 56)



PRIOR TO THE SESSION: Display **Pack Item 1** (*Map: The Travels of Jacob*), and **Pack Item 5** (*Poster: Key Moments in Jacob's Life*) for reference during the session. Draw three columns on a board or sheet of paper. Label the columns *Past*, *Present*, and *Future*.

ASK: **What do people commonly say when someone sneezes? What do we sometimes call the prayer said before eating?**

READ: Point out that each question relates to the idea of “blessing.” Enlist a volunteer to read the introduction on page 55 of the PSG. Encourage adults to review the definition of “blessing” and talk about how they would define the word.

ASK: **How has God been faithful to bless you? How do you think He wants to bless others through you?** (PSG, p. 55)

STATE: *This idea of “blessing” is a thread moving throughout the book of Genesis, so we need to consider what it means. God blesses people, and He calls us to bless others. These blessings can multiply beyond the person being blessed to even more people.*

REVIEW: Utilizing **Pack Item 5** (*Poster: Key Moments in Jacob's Life*) review the life of Jacob up to this point in Genesis. Highlight the promises God made to Jacob in the lesson prior to Easter.

TRANSITION: *In today's session we discover how God was faithful to keep the promises He made to Jacob at Bethel.*



NOTES

Group Activity Option

Music

Secure a copy of “The Blessing” by Kari Jobe and Cody Carnes. Invite the group to listen to the song and to meditate on ways that God is faithful to bless His people. Spend a few minutes allowing volunteers to share the connections they see between the song and the blessings they’ve experienced in their lives.

Past (Genesis 30:25-30)

25 After Rachel gave birth to Joseph, Jacob said to Laban, “Send me on my way so that I can return to my homeland. **26** Give me my wives and my children that I have worked for, and let me go. You know how hard I have worked for you.” **27** But Laban said to him, “If I have found favor with you, stay. I have learned by divination that the LORD has blessed me because of you.” **28** Then Laban said, “Name your wages, and I will pay them.” **29** So Jacob said to him, “You know how I have served you and how your herds have fared with me. **30** For you had very little before I came, but now your wealth has increased. The LORD has blessed you because of me. And now, when will I also do something for my own family?”

(v. 25) Rachel: Jacob favored **Rachel**, whose name meant “ewe.” She was the younger of Laban’s two daughters. After fleeing his homeland out of fear of Esau’s retaliation for stealing the blessing, Jacob met Rachel at a well where she was watering her father’s flocks. He agreed to work seven years to marry this woman out of his affection, but Jacob discovered after the wedding celebration that **•Laban** had given him his older daughter, Leah, instead. So Jacob worked seven more years to marry Rachel (Gen. 29:15-30).

Rachel bore two sons to Jacob: **Joseph** and Benjamin. Joseph ended up being Jacob’s favorite son. Meanwhile, Rachel died while giving birth to Benjamin (35:16-20). Matthew (2:18) cited Jeremiah’s reference (31:15) to Rachel’s weeping in connection with Herod the Great’s order to kill all the male children two years old and under. Herod issued this mandate soon after the wise men visited Jesus (Matt. 2:16). Here, Rachel is symbolized as the mother of all Israel.

(v. 25) Homeland: The Hebrew word translated **homeland** literally means “my place.” Jacob’s homeland designates Canaan or the promised land. By faith, Abraham had journeyed to this area in response to the Lord’s call (Gen. 12:1-4). It later became known as the land of Israel, thus bearing the name that Jacob’s wrestling opponent assigned to him at Peniel (Gen. 32:27-28). The expression “Dan to Beer-sheba” occurs a number of times in the Old Testament to idiomatically identify the northern and southern extremes of the promised land.

(v. 26) My wives and my children: Jacob’s family ultimately included two wives, two handmaids, twelve sons, and one daughter. Leah bore six sons to Jacob: Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, and Zebulun, and a daughter named Dinah. Leah’s handmaid, Zilpah, bore two sons: Gad and Asher. Rachel also gave birth to two sons: Joseph and Benjamin, though Benjamin was born after the family arrived in Canaan. Rachel’s handmaid, Bilhah, bore Dan and Naphtali.

Key Word

Divination

This term identifies making decisions or foretelling the future by reading signs and omens. The Bible refers to several means of **divination**. For example, the color, size, and position of the animal’s liver were considered when making choices or determining an individual’s fate. Pouring out arrows after shaking them in a quiver helped decide where an army should attack an enemy. People also practiced divination by looking into a cup filled with liquid (Gen. 44:4-5).

Egyptians, Philistines, and Babylonians engaged in divination. Both the Old and New Testaments record the Lord’s condemnation of such practices (see Ex. 22:18; Lev. 19:26; Deut. 18:9-22; 2 Kings 9:22; Isa. 3:1-3; Acts 8:9-24). The Scriptures repeatedly condemn the practice because the source is often demonic. Those who practice divination are attempting to circumvent the Lord to find guidance for the future.

(v. 27) Blessed: In the Old Testament, “to bless” means to endow someone with power for success, including prosperity and longevity. The same Hebrew term used here also appears in Genesis 30 to designate the prosperity both Laban and Jacob believed they had experienced because of Jacob’s care for Laban’s flocks and herds.



Jacob's Family Tree

Jacob was the father of the twelve ancestors of the twelve tribes of Israel. Study a visual representation of his family tree.

EXPLORE Genesis 30:25-30



APPLICATION POINT: Believers can be encouraged by God’s past blessings.

MINI-LECTURE: Using Understand the Context (PSG, p. 56), summarize Genesis 29:1–30:24. Record the key points under the column labeled *Past*. Highlight Jacob’s arrival in Haran by noting the northward arrows on **Pack Item 1** (*Map: The Travels of Jacob*).

STATE: *After shepherding Laban’s flock for all these years, and seeing his family grow, Jacob was ready for things to change.*

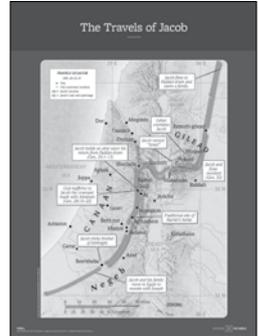
READ: **Invite a volunteer to read Genesis 30:25-30** as the group listens for Jacob’s request to Laban and Laban’s response. Distribute **Pack Item 7** (*Handout: Genesis Time Line*). Point out the birth of Joseph, which sets the context for today’s session.

ASK: **How would you describe the relationship between Jacob and Laban? Why?**

EXPLAIN: *As Laban’s son-in-law you might have expected a warmer family relationship. But the implication is that Laban considered Jacob as more of a servant than a son-in-law.*

ASK: **How did Laban’s flock change while Jacob was watching them? How does God’s past blessings raise a person’s expectations for the future?** (PSG, p. 59)

WRITE: Under the *Present* column write “Flocks multiplied” and “Family grew.”



CREATION-2000 BC	2000-2000 BC	2000-1800 BC
Creation of Adam and Eve	2000-1800 BC	1800-1600 BC
Adam and Eve in Eden	1800-1600 BC	1600-1400 BC
Noah's Ark	1600-1400 BC	1400-1200 BC
Abraham's Journey	1400-1200 BC	1200-1000 BC
Isaac's Journey	1200-1000 BC	1000-800 BC
Jacob's Journey	1000-800 BC	800-600 BC
Moses and the Exodus	800-600 BC	600-400 BC
Jesus' Birth	600-400 BC	400-200 BC
Jesus' Ministry	400-200 BC	200-0 BC
Jesus' Death and Resurrection	200-0 BC	0-100 AD
Paul's Ministry	0-100 AD	100-500 AD
Constantine's Conversion	100-500 AD	500-1000 AD
Crusades	500-1000 AD	1000-1500 AD
Reformation	1000-1500 AD	1500-1800 AD
Enlightenment	1500-1800 AD	1800-1900 AD
Industrial Revolution	1800-1900 AD	1900-2000 AD
World Wars	1900-2000 AD	2000-2023 AD
Space Age	2000-2023 AD	

NOTES

Group Activity Option

Object Lesson: Jar of Coins

Fill a jar with change. Display the jar and share that the jar was empty when you started. Note that over time, loose change can really add up. Explain that Jacob basically arrived in Haran with an “empty jar.” Explain that as he worked for Laban God blessed him. Note that God was faithful to Jacob and provided for him (just as He had promised) every step of the way.

Present (Genesis 30:31-34)

31 Laban asked, “What should I give you?” And Jacob said, “You don’t need to give me anything. If you do this one thing for me, I will continue to shepherd and keep your flock. **32** Let me go through all your sheep today and remove every sheep that is speckled or spotted, every dark-colored sheep among the lambs, and the spotted and speckled among the female goats. Such will be my wages. **33** In the future when you come to check on my wages, my honesty will testify for me. If I have any female goats that are not speckled or spotted, or any lambs that are not black, they will be considered stolen.” **34** “Good,” said Laban. “Let it be as you have said.”

(v. 31) Laban: His personal name means “white.” Laban was Rebekah’s brother and Leah’s and Rachel’s father. Laban, along with his father, granted permission for Rebekah to move to Canaan and marry Isaac (Gen. 24:50-51). To escape Esau, Jacob fled to Laban’s home in Paddan-aram (28:5). In dealing with Laban, Jacob the deceiver met his match. After working seven years to gain Rachel as a wife, Jacob discovered Laban had tricked him by giving him his older daughter, Leah, instead. He worked another seven years to also marry Rachel (29:15-30).

(v. 31) Shepherd: Although used as a verb here, the term also identifies Jacob’s occupation as a **shepherd** working for Laban. Shepherding constituted the primary occupation of God’s people in Genesis. Adam’s son Abel was a shepherd. So were Abraham, Rachel, Jacob, and Jacob’s sons. Moses and David were shepherds before becoming leaders of Israel.

Shepherds cared for sheep by leading them to pasture and water and guarding them from predators. The term shepherd later came to designate Israel’s kings (2 Sam. 5:1-2) and leaders (Jer. 23:1-4). Sheep represented wealth because they provided food, milk, wool, and leather. They also served as major offerings in the sacrificial system. In Psalm 23, David identified the Lord as his Shepherd (Ps. 23:1). Jesus described Himself as “the good shepherd” who “lays down his life for the sheep” (John 10:11).

(vv. 32-33) My wages: The noun designates the pay given to someone for their services. The related verb can refer to hiring an army to deliver people from their enemies (2 Sam. 10:6) or hiring skilled workers for specific tasks (2 Chron. 24:12).

In Genesis 30:18 the term is rendered “rewarded.” Literally, Leah stated that God had given her “wages” in reference to the birth of her son, Issachar. Interestingly, God never hires His servants. They work for him out of love and gratitude.

Key Word

Honesty

The Hebrew word translated **honesty** can also be rendered “righteousness” or “justice.” It basically means conformity to a moral or ethical standard. In the Old Testament that standard is the Lord’s nature and will (Ps. 145:17). Honesty involves more than just relating correctly to God. It also encompasses right relationships with other people. Jacob agreed to continue shepherding Laban’s flock if he could own every speckled, spotted, and dark-colored sheep. Since speckled animals typically produce speckled animals, Laban could check Jacob’s honesty.

(v. 32) Speckled or spotted . . . dark colored: In his agreement with Laban, Jacob specified that his sheep and goats were to be **speckled or spotted**, while his lambs would be **dark colored** (black, v. 33). Goats (dark or brown) and sheep (white) were usually the opposite of what Jacob requested. However, Laban could not refrain from deception. He took the animals that would have belonged to Jacob, gave them to his sons, and distanced himself from Jacob (Gen. 30:35-36). Laban acted in this manner despite the fact the initial agreement was of great advantage to him and of doubtful value to Jacob.

However, in 31:10-12, Jacob referred to a dream that formed the basis for his plan. If the dream occurred before Jacob’s bargain with Laban, then Jacob was trusting the Lord to multiply his flocks and herds. Nevertheless, the human effort detailed in 30:37-40 reveals Jacob may have been trying to achieve God’s plan in his own way. The bottom line is that Jacob only prospered because of God’s grace.

EXPLORE Genesis 30:31-34



APPLICATION POINT: Believers should demonstrate honesty in every area, including their business dealings.

READ: Read aloud Genesis 30:31-34, directing the group to identify Jacob's response to Laban's question about wages. Note again that Laban had recognized God's hand on Jacob's life and was trying to convince him to stay.

PARAPHRASE: Direct the group to work with a partner to paraphrase the verses. After a few minutes, allow some volunteers to share their paraphrases. Use page 74 of the Leader Guide and pages 60-61 of the PSG to highlight key words and phrases.

REFLECT: Guide the group to consider if Jacob's request is unusual. Affirm that Jacob had the leverage because Laban really wanted him to stay. *Yet, on the surface, his request seemed to favor Laban.*

ASK: **How did Jacob's actions demonstrate trust in God?**
(PSG, p. 60)

RECORD: Add Jacob's agreement under the *Present* column. Point out that Jacob was starting to shift toward a deeper trust in God and away from his own sneakiness.

ASK: **What are some ways people demonstrate integrity? Why is it important?** (PSG, p. 61)

TRANSITION: *After Laban agreed to Jacob's proposal. The lambs and goats were separated, and Jacob continued as the shepherd. And God continued to bless Jacob—even at Laban's expense.*

NOTES

Group Activity Option

Nature

Direct attention to the Bible Skill activity on page 61 of the PSG. Discuss how weather and external dangers, both human and animal, affect the shepherd and his flock. Remind the group that the size of the flock was an indication of wealth in Jacob's time. As time allows examine Psalm 23 and address the questions posed in the Bible Skill.

Future (Genesis 30:41-43)

41 Whenever the stronger of the flock were breeding, Jacob placed the branches in the troughs, in full view of the flocks, and they would breed in front of the branches. **42** As for the weaklings of the flocks, he did not put out the branches. So it turned out that the weak sheep belonged to Laban and the stronger ones to Jacob. **43** And the man became very rich. He had many flocks, female and male slaves, and camels and donkeys.

(v. 41) Stronger: This Hebrew term has an interesting history. It basically means “to bind” or “to tie.” For example, it appears in Joshua 2:18, where the Israelite spies instructed Rahab to tie a scarlet cord to her window to preserve her life when the Israelites conquered Jericho. The word also occurs in Deuteronomy 6:8 where the Lord commanded His people to bind His words or laws on their hands and foreheads. People can also be bound together in close relationship to one another.

In Genesis 44:30, the verb is rendered “wrapped up” and depicts Jacob’s close relationship with his son Benjamin. While binding can be restrictive, it can also provide strength. Thus in Genesis 30:41-42 the term conveys the concepts of being strong, robust, or vigorous. These animals were the best of the flocks Jacob was managing.

(v. 41) Breeding: The Hebrew verb basically means “to be hot.” The form of the verb used here means “to be in heat.” While the related noun can refer to physical heat such as a fever, it generally conveys an inner, emotional heat that can express itself in varying degrees. Thus the noun, which here refers to sexual arousal among animals, can also be mean “anger.” In Genesis 27:44, Esau raged after Jacob stole the blessing. The term also depicts God’s response to His unfaithful covenant people (Deut. 9:19; Jer. 42:18).

(v. 41) Branches: These **branches** likely came from poplar, almond, and plane trees (Gen. 30:37). Jacob peeled the bark from the branches, exposing white stripes underneath. Poplar trees grow next to water. They are tall with shaking leaves and suckering shoots around the bottoms of their trunks. The plane trees, which inhabit rocky stream beds, are large with flaking bark. Almond trees are smaller and produce white-colored flowers in early spring. Using the branches may have been part of a traditional folk custom in the region, but God used it for Jacob’s benefit.

(v. 43) Became very rich: This phrase more literally refers to exceeding limits. The verb, basically meaning

“to break” or “to breach,” possesses several shades of meaning. When used of human beings, it often conveys malicious and destructive activity. For example in 2 Kings 14:13, it depicts Israel’s King Jehoash breaking down the walls of Jerusalem. However, the verb can also mean “to increase.” This increase may be in material possessions (Job 1:10) or in offspring (Gen. 28:14; 1 Chron. 4:38). Increase in material possessions may result from a relative’s or friend’s assistance. However, as with Jacob, it often can be attributed solely to God’s grace.

(v. 43) Female and male slaves: The Hebrew term can also be rendered “servants.” The status of slavery among the Israelites involved rights and sometimes positions of trust. The law limited a fellow Israelite’s bondage to six years (Ex. 21:2). A king’s subjects were designated his servants (5:15), and leaders such as Moses (Deut. 34:5) and Joshua (Josh. 24:29) were recognized as the Lord’s servants, a position of honor. The most significant use appears in references to the Messiah as a suffering servant (Isa. 52:13; 53:11).

(v. 43) Donkeys: These animals served as field animals or as transportation. The donkey possessed enough value that its firstborn had to be redeemed by sacrificing a lamb (Ex. 13:13). The animal’s flesh might be consumed during desperate famine (2 Kings 6:25). While mules and horses were associated with war, donkeys were connected with peace and humility. Jesus fulfilled the prophecy in Zechariah 9:9 of the Messiah riding on a donkey (Matt. 21:5-7).

Key Doctrine

Stewardship

God is the source of all blessings, temporal and spiritual; all that we have and are we owe to Him. (See Psalm 50:10-12; James 1:17-19.)

EXPLORE Genesis 30:41-43



APPLICATION POINT: Believers can celebrate God's blessings in their lives.

READ: Invite a volunteer to read **Genesis 30:41-43** as the group listens for the result of Jacob's work.

EXPLAIN: Encourage the group to read through the information for verses 41-43 on page 62 of the PSG. Point out that Jacob's methods may have related to an ancient cultural practice or superstition. Emphasize that the ultimate success of his flocks and the increase in his wealth came from God, not from striped branches. Note that Jacob trusted God and that is what led to God's blessings.

ASK: **In what ways should God's faithfulness to bless His people impact the thinking and lives of His people?**
(PSG, p. 62)

WRITE: Under the *Future* column, write "God blessed Jacob's flocks." Highlight that this was part of the promise God made to Jacob when he saw the vision of the stairway at Bethel.

TRANSITION: *Jacob's actions demonstrated his trust in God. Even though Jacob had been deceitful in the past, he acted with transparency in his agreement with Laban and in relying on God to provide for Him.*

NOTES

Group Activity Option

Reflection

Prior to the session, make a poster with the three statements below. Lead the group to respond to the statements on a scale of one ("seldom") to five ("often"). (NOTE: Encourage stay-at-home parents to answer from that perspective.)

- I see the blessings that come from my work.
- I exhibit integrity in my business dealings.
- My work is an opportunity for others to see Christ working in me.

Emphasize that believers should act with integrity and can celebrate the way God blesses that honesty in their lives.

CHALLENGE

SUMMARIZE: Review these points from Apply the Text on page 63 of the *Personal Study Guide*:

- *Believers can be encouraged by God's past blessings.*
- *Believers should demonstrate honesty in every area, including their business dealings.*
- *Believers can celebrate God's blessings in their lives.*

GUIDE: Lead the group to determine whether the following statements are true or false. (NOTE: All are true.)

- *Blessings do not relate only to material provisions.*
- *Believers should bless others.*
- *God's blessings are evidence of His faithfulness.*
- *Believers can be encouraged by God's past blessings.*
- *Believers should celebrate God's blessings in their lives.*

REFLECT: Read aloud the chorus of "Count Your Blessings" (*Baptist Hymnal, 2008, No. 585*). Encourage adults to reflect on God's blessings in their lives. Challenge them to look for ways they can bless others.

PRAY: Lead the group to offer sentence prayers, thanking God for His blessings and faithfulness.

After the Session

Reinforce the session by sending a text or e-mail encouraging the group to remember ways God has blessed them. Encourage them to write a prayer of gratitude to God for all He has done for them and provided for them. Challenge them to intentionally look for ways to be a blessing to others.

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