Read Genesis 29:1-30

- Who was Laban, and why was Jacob going to live with him?

-What kind of person was Laban?

-If God was watching over Jacob as He had promised in Genesis 28:15, why do you think He would allow Jacob to be so deceived by Laban? (cf. Galatians 6:7)

-Was Jacob's marriage to Leah a valid marriage? (you might also consider Exodus 22:16-17)

Read Genesis 29:31 - 30:24

Jacob's children in this passage:

Name	Mother	Name means/sounds like	Name	Mother	Name means/sounds like
Reuben	Leah	See, a son/he has seen my misery	Gad	Zilpah (L)	Good fortune, or a troop
Simeon	Leah	One who hears	Asher	Zilpah (L)	Happy
Levi	Leah	Attached	Issachar	Leah	Reward
Judah	Leah	Praise	Zebulun	Leah	Honor
Dan	Bilhah (R)	He has vindicated	Dinah	Leah	?
Naphtali	Bilhah (R)	My struggle	Joseph	Rachel	May He add

-Describe Jacob's family life. In what ways did his marriage/family life fall short of God's design for marriage? (cf. Genesis 2:21-24; Ephesians 5:22-33)

-In spite of the problems, how was God nevertheless working in and through Jacob's family situation? What hope can this give to those in difficult family situations?

Read Genesis 30:25 - 31:21

-Why did Laban want Jacob to stay with him, and why did Jacob agree?

-How did Laban and Jacob each try to get the better of the other? Why did Jacob succeed?

-Why did Jacob ultimately decide to leave Laban?

Read Genesis 31:22-55
Note on the 'household gods' (Lit., teraphim) – these were images or figurines of varying sizes that signified either special protection, inheritance rights, or fertility for the bearer; possession by Rachel may have called for Jacob to be recognized as head of the household upon Laban's death (source: MacArthur Study Bible).

-Why did Jacob deceive Laban by leaving without telling him (Gen. 31:20)? Were his fears well founded?

-What do today's passages teach us about God, and how can we apply these lessons to our lives today? (you might also consider Galatians 6:7; Hebrews 12:5-11; Psalm 37:1-9, 39-40)

Aliens and strangers in the world
We saw in our last study how Jacob conspired with his mother, Rebekah, to deceive his father Isaac. Today, we see Jacob reaping the consequences of his actions. Having been forced to flee to his uncle Laban, Jacob was himself deceived by Laban into marrying Leah, resulting in 7 extra years of hard labor and a home life filled with discord and strife. Through it all, however, God was faithful to the promise He had made at Bethel to be with Jacob and to watch over him (Gen. 28:13-15). In His sovereignty, God allowed Jacob to reap what he had sown, using Laban's schemes and Jacob's difficult circumstances to discipline and shape him. At the same time, however, God used these same circumstances to bring about fulfillment of His promise to make Jacob's descendants "like the dust of the earth" (Gen. 28:14). He also placed limits on how far Laban could go, enabling Jacob ultimately to prosper in spite of Laban's efforts to the contrary (31:11-12). In the end, when Jacob's time of chastening was complete, God called him to return home and rebuked Laban for his wicked deeds.

God's dealings with Jacob serve both as a warning and an encouragement to us today. When we sin, we open ourselves to God's discipline, because He disciplines those He loves (Heb. 12:6). Yet, even when He allows us to reap some of the consequences of our sinful thoughts and actions, we who know Him can have confidence that He does all things for our good, and that however difficult or painful our resulting circumstances may be, they are not outside the realm of His sovereign control, and He will not let us be tempted beyond what we are able to bear (1 Cor. 10:13). Thus, when we face His discipline, we should not grow impatient nor lose heart, but rather submit ourselves to Him and to His shaping work in our lives. "My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when He rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines those He loves, and He punishes everyone He accepts as a son." (Heb. 12:5-6)