

Navigating the mess

Genesis 29:15-28

Jacob agrees to work for his uncle Laban to marry his youngest daughter, Rachel. After the seven years are up, Laban tricks Jacob by having him marry Rachel's older sister, Leah – perhaps to ensure that she is honoured according to local customs. Jacob agrees to a further seven years of work to ensure that he can marry Rachel too.

Read this week's passage:



Research

Look at the labels of some of your clothes. Research online where and how they were made. Email the manufacturers asking for this information and letting them know you care about the individuals behind your clothing.

REFLECT

Reflect on what motivates you in life using these questions: What would you want people to say about you? If you had £100, what would you spend it on? If you could do anything you wanted for the day, what would you do (places, activities, people to spend it with)? Finish by praying for God's guidance when making decisions.



Bake some bread – it's a messy process when you knead through it with your hands. Working through the mess properly creates a bouncy, smooth dough ready to prove and bake into a yummy treat. As you knead it, pray for the messy situations in your life.

Find more free Roots resources to reflect on this week's theme:



Living Scripture

'Laban said, "This is not done in our country – giving the younger before the firstborn."' Genesis 29:26

Have you ever been to a country with customs different from your own? For example, you might have had to navigate using different types of cutlery or queuing in a particular way (or not!). Or perhaps you have visited someone's home where things are done differently – shoes on or shoes off at the door, eating at the table or on trays with the TV on...

It can be hard for us to understand why Jacob wasn't allowed to marry the girl he loved. It seems deceitful and perhaps even cruel to make him marry Leah first – and we see some of the mess this causes when Jacob continues to prefer Rachel, leaving Leah feeling uncared for.

But in the culture of that time and place, if Leah hadn't been married before Rachel, she would have become an outcast, never being able to marry and have children, and potentially experiencing extreme poverty and deprivation.

Following God doesn't mean that life is always simple; it's not always clear what 'the right thing' to do is. How do our cultural expectations affect how we follow God? What might God be saying to us to help us navigate those hard choices?

First impressions

- What situations are difficult or confusing right now?
- How can we faithfully encourage and support those who are struggling?
- Are we able to be real at church, even when life is messy?



Pray

Lord God,
you know the complexities and messiness of our world.
Help us to make good choices,
to be aware of our impact on others,
and to use the gifts you have given us
to bless those around us.
Amen.



WATCH



Watch *Matilda the Musical*. The song 'Naughty' focuses on how life isn't fair, Matilda is in a messy and unjust situation, and the only way out is to be a little bit naughty. How does this compare to our Bible passage today?