



THE BEGINNINGS!

The Book of Genesis

Faith and God's Influence!

Message #33 of 50 – S933

Sermon given on February 21, 2021

@ Calvary Chapel French Valley, Murrieta, CA



Sunday Morning Service

Pastor Rick Lancaster

Faith and God's Influence!

Genesis 31:1-55

Opening Comments

- Good morning – we will be in **Genesis 31**
 - Today we continue our journey through **Genesis: THE BEGINNINGS!**
 - A few weeks ago, I shared that God's providence is often unseen
 - God is always working, everywhere and in everything
 - It takes faith to see God's providence in everything
 - And even then, it can seem impossible to see what God is doing
 - Another area of faith that might not be easy to see is God's influence
- Influence: the power to change or affect someone or something: the power to cause changes without directly forcing them to happen: a person or thing that affects someone or something in an important way**
- In this long chapter we are going to see God influencing several people
 - One of the ways we see God influencing people is by making them hear His voice
 - In my spiritual life, I believe I have heard God's voice a few times
 - One of those times was right before we launched this church
 - There were about 10 or 12 of us meeting to discuss the launch
 - We had set a launch date of October 17, 2004
 - Early in October we were meeting, and we had not found a place for the church to meet
 - The group discussed what we should do – postpone launch, start looking in different areas
 - As I sat listening, I believe I heard God's voice say to me – 'I told you to go out – does it matter that I haven't told you where to go?'
 - I shared that with the group – we launched on October 17th and within two weeks we found where we would start services
 - Typically, God's influence is more subtle, but it is always there
 - Our goal here is to learn some of the ways God influences us so that we can respond in a way that glorifies God, blesses others, and grows faith
 - Let's pray and ask the Holy Spirit to help us to see with eyes of faith

- **Pray**

Teaching

- **Faith and God's Influence!**
- Chapter 30 ended with Jacob becoming 'exceedingly prosperous'
- Even in that we will see that God was providentially influencing Jacob
- Though that was not apparent in the text
- Jacob's prosperity is not good news to everyone
- **Genesis 31:1-2**
- Six years earlier Jacob had felt like it was time for him to go back home
- Laban talked him out of it with a pay raise
- I believe God wanted Jacob to leave six years earlier
- So, God influences Laban's sons by stirring up their natural tendencies – jealousy, resentment
- God is making Jacob uncomfortable so that he will do what God wants him to do
- **Genesis 31:3**
- It is in human nature to hear God more clearly when we are uncomfortable, struggling, suffering, or in fear
- Jacob knows he must do something
- **Genesis 31:4-13**
- In the last chapter, it looked like Jacob was practicing smart selective breeding with a little superstition mixed in
- Now we are told that God was influencing him in his choices
- And to Jacob's credit, he was doing what He sensed God telling him
- Jacob's faith is growing – sees God's hand of protection
- Jacob talks to Rachel and Leah about what he is thinking
- That is a word of wisdom to all husbands – including me
- **Genesis 31:14-16**
- Sadly, it is hard to find a single nice thing to say about Laban
- Even his daughters Leah and Rachel want to be done with him
- As far as we can tell, this is the only time they agreed on anything
- **Genesis 31:17-19**
- Laban was a pagan unbeliever – worshipped the gods of his culture

- Symbolized in idols of wood or stone – maybe adorned with precious metals or stones
- It is not clear why Rachel would take these idols – ‘teraphim’
- Maybe to get back at her dad – maybe she felt they needed them
- **Genesis 31:20-24**
- Laban had an encounter with the living God, and it had an impact upon him.
- It influenced Laban enough to obey in this one thing, but it did not cause him to turn away from his idols.
- ‘...neither good nor bad,’ – didn’t leave Laban with any room to change the situation.
- No threatening or sweet-talking or deal-making would be allowed.
- **Genesis 31:25-30**
- Laban expresses hypocritical indignation
- He didn’t get a chance to say goodbye to his children, but then his children were willing to leave without saying goodbye
- Then accuses Jacob of stealing his gods
- This is the first reference in the Scriptures of false gods.
- How small and weak must your gods be if they can be stolen.
- Even though Laban had a personal encounter with the One True God, he clung to his false gods.
- That is the demonic power of worshipping what is false.
- That is the problem with some of the movements going on in our culture: climate change and social justice – become quasi-religions
- **Genesis 31:31-35**
- Rachel says she is on her period and can’t get up – True?
- Laban did not challenge Rachel in this because it was inconceivable for him that she would be so sacrilegious as to sit on the idols while she was in her time of impurity.
- **Genesis 31:36-42**
- Years of pent-up frustration come spewing out of Jacob
- Leaves Laban somewhat speechless
- **Genesis 31:43-44**
- Yeah, yeah – whatever
- Weird – everything you have actually belongs to me – really?

- Then he draws a line in the sand
- **Genesis 31:44-49**
- This is known by some as the Mizpah Benediction
- Say it as a form of blessing – even engrave wedding rings with it
- It is not a blessing – it is an oath of distrust and fear.
- Probably shouldn't be engraved on a wedding ring.
- Saying, 'Because I don't trust you, I want God to keep an eye on you.'
- That becomes clear in the next verses
- **Genesis 31:50-53a**
- You stay on your side and I will stay on mine
- **Genesis 31:53b-55**
- Twice the phrase 'the Fear of Isaac' is used in this chapter
- Only place it occurs – a little obscure
- With that Laban passes from Jacob's life and out of the pages of Scripture
- God's influence is seen all through this chapter
- He spoke directly to both Jacob and Laban
- He placed images in Jacob's mind about the flocks to inspire to act in a certain way
- By faith it is possible to see God's fingerprints on all the things of our lives
- Want to share with three ways God can influence you to do His will, for His glory, to bless others, and to grow faith
- **Faith and God's Influence!**
- First – **Desire**
- God will put desires in our heart to do His will
- Six years earlier this happened with Jacob **Genesis 30:25-26**
And it came to pass, when Rachel had borne Joseph, that Jacob said to Laban, "Send me away, that I may go to my own place and to my country. ²⁶ Give me my wives and my children for whom I have served you, and let me go; for you know my service which I have done for you."
- Unfortunately, Jacob allowed Laban to entice him to stay with him
- God influences us by putting a desire in our heart **Psalms 37:4**
Delight yourself also in the LORD, and He shall give you the desires of your heart.
- Sometimes before we can do anything about it

- When I first sensed God might want to make me a pastor – was a couple of years before it was possible
- Though we must be careful about not blindly following our desires

Jeremiah 17:9

The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked; who can know it?

- The desires of our heart must be verified to make sure they are God's will – not all desires from God
- Second way God influences us – **Difficulty**
- Sometimes to motivate us to do His will, God will make us uncomfortable where we are – especially if we are slow to respond
- Jacob finally decided it was time to leave when Laban and his sons turned against him
- Just like you can't blindly follow your desires, you can't blindly use your difficulties as proof that God wants you to do something
- For example, if you are in a difficult marriage – leaving is not the right decision
- Why? Because God's Word says so – He declared His Will in His Word
- God can influence you through desire or difficulty
- But the best way – **Directly**
- In a dream God told Jacob to leave – He told Laban to let Jacob leave
- God can and does speak to His people
- God can and does use supernatural means to communicate His will
- The most common way that God chooses to influence us is through His Word and through His people
- That is why we never fail to remind you to stay in your Bible
- A regular interaction with God's Word and vital connection to God's people is the best way to experience God's influence in your life
- Through God's Word and His people, you can discern more clearly when your desires and difficulties are God trying to influence you
- Just as God's providence is seen by faith so is His influence
- I have very little experience sailing but I know enough to know the sail catches the wind and it propels the boat
- On a sailboat, you don't just raise the sail – you do what they call trimming the sail

- You adjust the sail until it is catching as much of the wind as possible
- In your life, God's influence is the wind, and your faith is the sail
- The better you know God, the larger your faith becomes, the more of God's influence is caught in your life and you are propelled into the good life that God intends for you
- God sent Jesus to save us and we praise His holy name for that
- But Jesus also came to change our lives for the better **John 10:10b**
I have come that they may have life, and that they may have *it* more abundantly.
- That life is lived by faith in Jesus Christ and yielding to the good and loving influence of Almighty God
- Let's pray and ask God to fill the sails of our faith
- **Invitation/Prayer!**
-