

## Chapter 3

### LEAH the UNWANTED BRIDE

This title seemed to capture our study for today, but out of curiosity, I checked to see if there was already a book by this name and yes, there is a fictional romance novel called "The Unwanted Bride"! (I have not read it so this is NOT a book recommendation!) But today we are looking at Leah's non-fiction romance story, and there is much we can learn.

Jacob (Rebekah's son) loved Leah's younger sister Rachel. Rachel was beautiful, and Jacob worked for her father Laban for 7 years the right to marry her. However, on the wedding night, Laban made the switch, and gave Jacob the older, less attractive sister, Leah. Imagine how Leah felt when Jacob was "raging" at her father the next day, "What is this you have done to me? Did I not serve with you for Rachel? Why then have you deceived me?" (Gen. 29:25) So the next week, Laban gave him Rachel as his wife too. Now Leah has to share her husband with her incredibly beautiful sister, and he's a husband who doesn't think she's pretty and never wanted her in the first place.

So Leah does the natural thing. She tries "performance based acceptance" to earn Jacob's love by giving him as many sons as possible.

*"When the Lord saw that Leah was hated, he opened her womb, but Rachel was barren.*

*(Genesis 29:31-35, paraphrased)*

And Leah conceived and bore a son, (Reuben)

*"...now my husband will love me."*

And Leah conceived again, and bore a son (Simeon)

*"Because the Lord has heard that I am hated, He has given me this son also."*

Again she conceived and bore a son (Levi)

*"Now this time my husband will be attached to me because I have borne him three sons."*

And she conceived again and bore a son, (Judah) and said,

*"This time I will praise the Lord."*

It seems that by the fourth son, Leah had a paradigm shift - it wasn't about earning her husband's love at that point, it was about loving God. She seemed to understand that the Lord loves her. And, although she falls back into the performance trap later on, at least at this moment, I think she experienced rest - and not just from birthing all those babies, but from striving to earn acceptance. Trying to please people is exhausting, and there is so much freedom in letting go.

As coaches' wives, we sometimes feel that pressure to perform - to have it all together for the parents and fans, even other coaches' wives and our own husbands. To do it all! To handle all logistics and emotional needs of the kids, the laundry, the job...And when we don't keep the plates spinning, we can get frustrated with ourselves and even compare ourselves with other wives! But we cannot live for the affection or approval of others - not even of our own husbands. Believe it or not, our husbands find us most beautiful when we are praising the Lord and finding our value in Him!

## WRAP IT UP:

1. **FIGHTING FEAR:** There is a good chance that Leah felt powerless in her life. She couldn't get out of the relationship, and the pain of rejection was probably a constant struggle. We all fear rejection in some way, and we all want to be loved! It's easy to fall into the trap of performing to avoid rejection and earn love. Do you have an example of fighting your fears by trying to perform? Maybe fears that concern moving to a new place and meeting new coaches' wives or trying to be the perfect coach's wife where you are?

Ask the Lord to show you your value in Him and His love for you.

*"There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love."- 1 John 4:18*

2. **FINDING FAITH:** There came a point for Leah when she desired to please God more than her husband - not that she still didn't desire a loving relationship with Jacob, but it appears that he was no longer her idol and she was no longer putting her faith in him and what he thought of her, at least for a time. As much as we love our husbands and want more time with them through the busy seasons, we can find fulfillment in the Lord regardless of the fact that he might not have time to give us much attention! Do you struggle with finding worth in your husband? Is there a way you can make the most of the time you do have together?

Ask the Lord to give you faith to believe He is at work in our marriages, and He can fill our hearts more than any earthly relationship.

*"...as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you."- Isaiah*

**PRAYER:**

*Lord, we can't do it all even on our best days. Yes, we want our husbands to think we are beautiful. Yes, we want them to be glad they married us. But no, we won't find unconditional love in anyone but You. Thank you for this love and acceptance because of Your son Jesus. Help us to live in freedom and praise of You. Amen!*