



*What Two Sisters Teach Us
about Combating Comparison*

NICKI KOZIARZ





*What Two Sisters Teach Us
about Combating Comparison*

NICKI KOZIARZ



LifeWay Press® Nashville, Tennessee

EDITORIAL TEAM
ADULT MINISTRY PUBLISHING

Faith Whatley
Director, Adult Ministry

Michelle Hicks
Manager, Adult Ministry
Short Term Bible Studies

Mike Wakefield
Content Editor

Sarah Doss
Production Editor

Heather Wetherington
Art Director

Alexis Ward
Cover Design

Special thanks to
David Abernathy
Research Assistant

Published by LifeWay Press® • ©2018 Nicki Koziarz

No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying and recording, or by any information storage or retrieval system, except as may be expressly permitted in writing by the publisher. Requests for permission should be addressed in writing to LifeWay Press®; One LifeWay Plaza; Nashville, TN 37234.

ISBN 978-1-4627-5045-0

Item 005794724

Dewey decimal classification: 248.843

Subject heading: SELF-CONFIDENCE/
SELF-ACCEPTANCE/WOMEN

Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are taken from the Christian Standard Bible®, Copyright © 2017 by Holman Bible Publishers®. Used by permission. Christian Standard Bible® and CSB® are federally registered trademarks of Holman Bible Publishers. Scripture quotations marked (HCSB) are taken from the Holman Christian Standard Bible®, Copyright © 1999, 2000, 2002, 2003, 2009 by Holman Bible Publishers. Used by permission. Holman Christian Standard Bible®, Holman CSB®, and HCSB® are federally registered trademarks of Holman Bible Publishers. Scripture quotations marked NIV are from THE HOLY BIBLE, NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION®, NIV® Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide. Scripture quotations marked ESV are from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version® (ESV®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Scripture quotations marked NASB taken from the New American Standard Bible®, Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. www.lockman.org.

To order additional copies of this resource, write LifeWay Church Resources Customer Service; One LifeWay Plaza; Nashville, TN 37234; Fax order to 615.251.5933; call toll-free 800.458.2772; email orderentry@lifeway.com; order online at www.lifeway.com; or visit the LifeWay Christian Store serving you.

Printed in the United States of America

Adult Ministry Publishing, LifeWay Church Resources,
One LifeWay Plaza, Nashville, TN 37234

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABOUT THE AUTHOR	5
INTRODUCTION	6
WEEK ONE: You need to be honest.	10
WEEK TWO: See it like it really is.	40
WEEK THREE: You don't always have to be okay.	70
WEEK FOUR: You didn't do anything wrong.	96
WEEK FIVE: Her gain is not your loss.	120
WEEK SIX: Let the success of others encourage not discourage you.	146
ENDNOTES	174



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Nicki Koziarz is a wife, mom, author, and speaker with Proverbs 31 Ministries. She and her husband own a fixer-upper farm just outside of Charlotte, North Carolina, where they are raising their girls and a barnyard of misfit animals. Nicki speaks nationally at conferences and retreats. She is part of the First 5 writer team at Proverbs 31. Visit her website nickikoziarz.com to connect.



What will it take for you to say at the end of your life, “It is well with my soul”?¹

That question began this journey for me. Because things were not well. I was letting something consume my life. It greeted me every morning. And teased me at night. It was there in the mirror. It was there on the scale. It was in the work meeting. It was everywhere.

COMPARISON.

Feeling less than. Never quite measuring up. Always seeming to be a step behind. And who was I chasing? *Her*.

There is so much to be said about opening the Bible and reading it just as it is. But I’ve found that when I take my struggles through the Scriptures I uncover a way to become someone I could never be on my own. There is power, authority, and wisdom tucked into the pages of these ancient texts we hold.

Studying the Bible should be an incredible journey anyone can jump in on. It is a journey filled with answers to questions, some we couldn’t even think to ask.

And maybe as we look at this comparison struggle, there’s a question you’re not sure you’ve ever really been honest enough to ask. It’s this quiet question tucked away in the soul of a woman as she sees beauty, looks at success, and wonders where her happily ever after is.

This question—*Why her?*

Why not me?

What’s wrong with me?

Who even am I?



As we take a close look at the lives of two women who I consider the two most famous sisters in Scripture, we'll see how their striving only led to more struggles. We'll note how much each sister lost herself trying to be someone she wasn't. And we'll see what can happen to a woman when she decides to combat comparison God's way.

Each week you'll do five days of personal study. The first four days you'll be looking at a part of Rachel's and Leah's story in a fresh and powerful way. You'll read Scripture passages, answer questions, and let yourself wrestle with comparison. Day Five will be light and fun as you do some work on personal insight. All of this will put you on the hunt for who God says you are and who you're yet to become.

Each week we'll also focus on a verse to help you combat comparison and a truth, grounded in the Word of God, that will help you keep comparison from compromising who God created you to be.

Because truth, like always, will set us free. And free women don't have to measure up to anyone. Not even *her*.

On a scale of 1-10 (with 1 being no knowledge and 10 being very knowledgeable), how would you rate your understanding of the story of Rachel and Leah?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

What facts do you know about this story? List them below, even if it's just the names of people in the story. (Hint, you already know two names.)

The majority of our study of Rachel and Leah will take place in Genesis 29–31. You're going to be blown away by how much just three chapters in the Bible will teach us. Each day you'll begin study with prayer. I know a lot of times we end our studies in prayer, and we'll do that a few times throughout this journey. But there is something powerful about beginning our study by clearing our minds and asking God to step in and teach us only the things He can.

Okay, let's go discover how to combat comparison!



TRUTH ONE:
You need to be honest.

COMBATING COMPARISON VERSE ONE:
LORD, you have searched me and known me.

PSALM 139:1



GROUP GUIDE



WARM THINGS UP

Ask everyone in your group to answer the following questions. This will help you guys start to build the much needed community for this study!

What made you decide to be a part of this study?

What are some hopes/expectations you have for this study?

Where do you like to do your Bible study?

If money and time were no object, what is one thing you would want to accomplish?

What tends to distract and detour you away from doing Bible study?

WATCH

To hear more from Nicki, download the optional video bundle to view the Week One teaching at LifeWay.com/RachelandLeah.

CREATE CONVERSATION

If there's one thing you could change about yourself, what would it be? Does this desired change come from healthy motivation or is it driven by comparison? Explain.

How have you seen comparison do damage in a person's life?

How have you personally experienced the negative consequences of comparison?

In what areas of your life are you more prone to compare?

End your time together by praying for the women in your group to have the freedom and trust to be honest before the Lord, with themselves, and with the group.



DAY ONE

AND SO IT BEGINS

Jacob resumed his journey and went to the eastern country. He looked and saw a well in a field.

GENESIS 29:1-2a

PERSONAL PRAYER FOR TODAY'S STUDY:

Every journey begins with the first step. And today, we take our first step into an ancient text to discover one of the most fascinating stories in the Bible. This story is filled with a lot of drama, jaw-dropping statements, and things that will literally make your eyes bulge. But it's also a love story, a redemption story, and ultimately a God-story.

Go ahead and grab your Bible, and read **Genesis 29:1-3**.

One of the best things we can do after reading a Bible verse or verses is to start asking questions.

What questions can you think of to ask about these three verses?

Right off the bat, here are a few questions I'm asking:

Who is Jacob?

What is this journey he's on?

Where is this well in a field?

Just so you know, we may not be able to answer all your questions throughout this journey. There are some things that the Bible just flat-out leaves a mystery. Questions that leave us with more questions. And answers that don't really seem to be answers.

But for today, let's start with what I consider the most important question from these verses:

Who is Jacob?

A few months ago, I had an informational meeting with some new people at a little coffee shop in our small town. After I got my coffee, I walked over toward two women sitting at a table in the corner and asked if they were there for the same meeting. They replied with a quick *yes* and then continued their conversation, completely ignoring me.

Unsure if I was interrupting them, I pulled one of the other chairs at the table away from them and sat down, as if the space would create some type of emotional barrier between us. It didn't work, but at least I tried.

Getting more and more insecure by the moment, I tried to grasp what they were talking about so I could jump into the conversation. They mentioned a name that was familiar to me, so I jumped in, "Oh, I know her!"

They both gave me the strangest looks. Then one of them replied in a rather snobbish tone, "Her, is a him."

Ahem. Blush.

Obviously, I stopped trying to figure out who they were talking about and just sat quietly, feeling like a complete fool.

In the midst of the awkwardness, I was reminded of how important it is to know the context of a situation. We can't always just jump into conversations assuming we know what's going on.

Which is also true about studying the Bible. Sure, there are no Bible-reading rules saying we can't open our Bibles, read a verse in one book, and then jump to a verse in another book.

But taking the time to understand what's happening where we pick up in the story, understanding who is who, and studying a story inside and out is valuable. It's important so that we don't miss out on what's *really* happening.

God doesn't require you to have a ton of previous knowledge about the Scripture passage you're studying. Jumping into the middle of a story is fine. But, usually we gain a deeper understanding of the story by learning more of the background. God is the best teacher—always welcoming our questions, our curiosities, and even our doubts. There's never a snobby response back from Him if we get something wrong or don't understand things.

When we understand the whole picture of what we're studying, we gain amazing insight. When I first read Jacob's name, I thought I knew a lot about him. But what I discovered was fascinating.

Let's figure out exactly who Jacob was. Turn to Genesis 25:19-28. Read those verses, and then answer these questions.

1. Jacob's mother and father were named _____ and _____.

2. Circle the correct answer:

- A. Jacob was three years older than his brother.
- B. Jacob was five years younger than his brother.
- C. Esau and Jacob were twins.

3. How old was Isaac when they were born?

4. What does it say the boys grew up to do?

Esau:

Jacob:

5. According to verse 28, why did Isaac love Esau?

6. Does the text say why Rebekah loved Jacob?

7. What are your thoughts about this confession concerning who was whose favorite child?

FAST FACT:

You may have heard of Isaac before. He was Abraham's son—the son Abraham was willing to sacrifice until God sent the ram. See Genesis 22 to read this story.

Comparison is already rearing its ugly head in this journey. The relationship between these two boys is where it begins, but it will be a thread throughout the entire story.

Tomorrow we're going to answer the question of what type of journey Jacob was on. But for now, I want to talk about your journey and share a little more about mine.

For way too long comparison stole so much from me. It made me miss out on the special, unique, and incredible plans God had for my life. It kept me looking to the left and to the right, missing what was right in front of me. I was miserable in my lane of life. And my license plate could have read, *Unhappiest Woman in America*.

I have a feeling you've had a moment or two like this in your life too. Because no matter how confident the woman, at some point she's been compared to someone else, and she's done the comparing. None of us are given a pass on this struggle. I've discovered most of us women love to shout our successes, but we seldom speak of our sorrows.

And battling comparison, unlike wanting to quit, being disorganized, or not having it all together, is a struggle we rarely admit.

Maybe you've not allowed yourself to admit the struggle of comparison in your life. Or maybe you're so fed up with this struggle you are ready to suffocate it.

But we're here. Together. Ready to do the best we can do to combat this comparison compromise.

Circle all the areas where comparison has tried to take you captive:

Work Relationships Body Image Social Media Cars
Houses Clothing Success Family Finances

Are there other areas? Let's get honest about them, right here, right now. This is just between you, me, and God. List other specific areas where you are struggling with comparison.

TURN TO 2 CORINTHIANS 10:12.

What does this verse say happens when we compare ourselves?

What are some of the effects comparison has had on you?

As we wrap up this first day of study, let's take a minute and process a few things. By the end of this study, I want you to have a greater understanding of what God thinks of you. When we shift our minds to resting in what God says and thinks about us, we'll shift our thinking and words about ourselves.

Which is why I'm giving you six Truths and six Combating Comparison Verses throughout this study around which you can build a holy confidence.

Go back to the first page of this week's study.

Write out Truth One:

Write out Combating Comparison Verse One:

Throughout the week we'll spend some time processing Truth One, but today I want you to process Verse One.

1. Read Psalm 139:1-16 to get the full context of this verse.
*Bonus study, read the whole psalm.
2. Do a web search to find out who wrote this psalm. The author was _____.
3. What do you think would have made this verse significant in the author's life?
4. What does it mean to you to know that God knows everything about you?

Okay friend, that's a wrap for Day One. See you tomorrow as we learn more about Jacob's role in this tale of two sisters.





DAY TWO

HE JUST HAD TO GO

Jacob asked the men at the well, "My brothers! Where are you from?" "We're from Haran," they answered. "Do you know Laban grandson of Nahor?" Jacob asked them. They answered, "We know him."

GENESIS 29:4-5

PERSONAL PRAYER FOR TODAY'S STUDY:

Can you think of the most defining moments of your life? Those moments when everything shifted in an instant? When nothing was ever the same?

Of course, the moment we invite Jesus into our lives should always be the most defining, but I'm talking about other moments or places where decisions defined us, maybe even in a not-so-great way.

We've all had them. Some more dramatic than others, but they are there. I remember one of mine very clearly.

Nineteen. Alone. Standing in a bathroom holding a pregnancy test that read *positive*. My life shifted in that moment. It was a defining moment for me. While I had struggled with comparison for what seemed like a lifetime, becoming a mom at such a young age wasn't exactly an ideal situation for learning to become comfortable in my own skin.

I spent a lot of my early twenties looking at all these women who seemed to have life way more figured out than I did. Comparison convinces us we're failures. And our failures leave us in a place of constant comparison. It's a cycle that never seems to go away.

But failure really is one of life's greatest teachers. And it's time for you and me to get honest about our failures. There's so much God wants to teach us from our pasts. They contain clues to help us understand what's happening today.

Describe your earliest memory of comparison in your life.

How has comparison played a role in a significant failure in your life?

What are some examples of ways adults compare kids?

In yesterday's study, we saw Jacob's and Esau's parents showing favoritism. This would have definitely been a defining moment in each of their journeys. How do the comparisons we experience as children affect defining moments in the future?

Yesterday we learned a little bit about Jacob, who's such a significant part of this story. Let's jump back in and uncover a few more of his defining moments.

One such occasion took place at this "well in a field" (Gen. 29:2) You might be wondering, *what's he doing at this well anyway?*

Let's do some digging.

READ GENESIS 25:27-34.

Using the CSB version of the Bible (if you don't have it on hand, head to biblegateway.com), read verses 30-31 again.

What does Esau call the meal Jacob was making?

What does Jacob ask Esau to sell him?

**FAST FACT,
BIRTHRIGHT:**

The firstborn son was given special privileges and duties in the family. He also received a double portion of the inheritance.¹ For Esau to sell his birthright for a pot of beans would have been the equivalent to selling your grandmother's two-carat diamond ring for a bowl of Cheerios. Not worth it.

What role might comparison have played during this defining moment for Jacob and Esau?

This is a big defining moment for both Jacob and Esau. Nothing would ever be the same between them again. But this intense struggle to be the best didn't end there. In fact, we'll see it get worse a few verses later. It's a constant theme throughout their story.

Isaac became old and unable to see well (Gen. 27:1). He became weak and sick and thought his days might be up very soon. So he asked Esau to go kill and cook him something yummy to eat. Isaac wanted this to be a special occasion between him and Esau in which he could give Esau his blessing (Gen. 27:2-4).

The blessing was different than the birthright. The birthright was what the firstborn son was required to get by law, such as the double portion of the inheritance.² The blessing, such as who would become head of the extended family after the father's death, was decided upon and bestowed by the father.³ So what Jacob did next was extra conniving. He and his mother, Rebekah, cooked up a scheme to trick Isaac into giving Jacob the blessing, instead of Esau, and Isaac fell for it. (Read Genesis 27:5-40 for the whole story.)

FAST FACT:

Isaac went on to live more than forty years after this incident.⁴

And whoa, did this stir up some anger in Esau. He wanted to kill his brother. Once Rebekah realized Jacob was in danger, they made a drastic decision.

READ GENESIS 27:41–28:2.

Where did Rebekah tell Jacob to go?

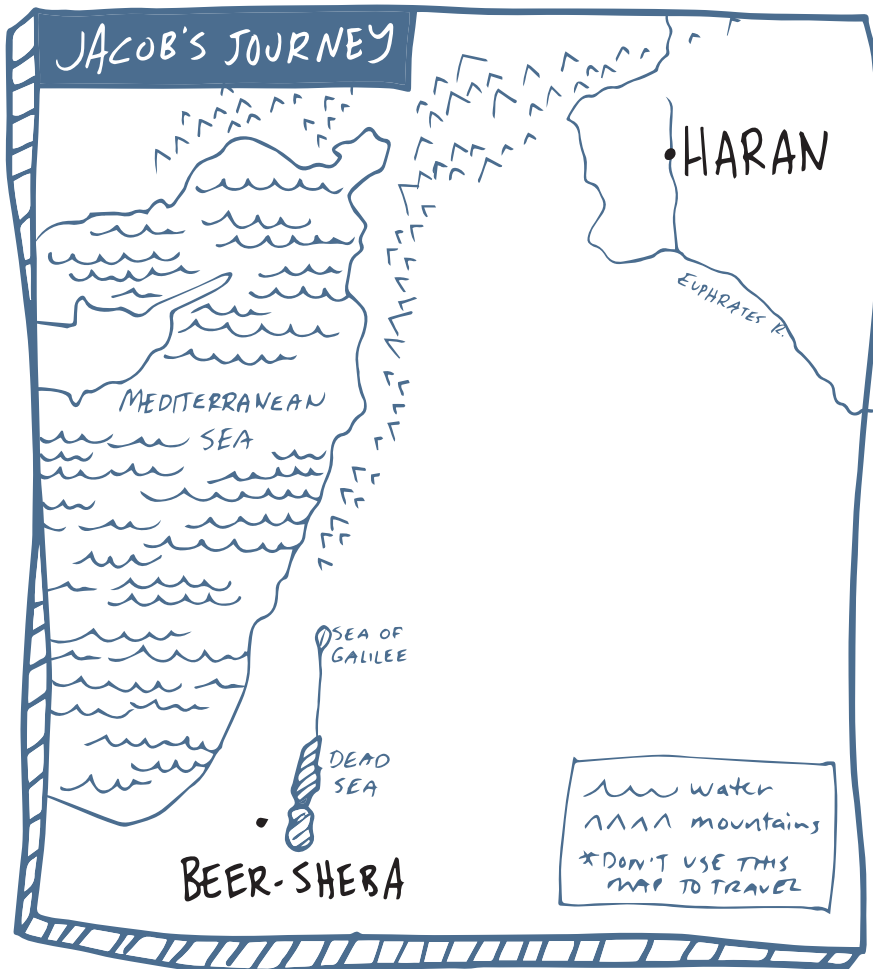
Circle the reason(s) why Rebekah and Isaac told Jacob to go to Haran:

- A. To give Esau time to calm down
- B. To find a wife
- C. To hide from Esau
- D. All of the above

What marriage instructions did Isaac give Jacob?

Turn to Genesis 28:10. From what city does it say Jacob started?

On the map below, draw a line from Jacob's starting point to his ending point.



FAST FACT:

Jacob's journey was about five hundred miles. It would have taken him weeks to make this trip.⁵

Does Genesis 29:1-4 tell us how long it took Jacob to arrive at the well? Circle the best answer.

Yes No

That's about like walking from Charlotte, North Carolina, to Orlando, Florida, or from San Diego to San Francisco, California.

As we wrap up today's study, let's think about our starting points and where we want to end up. Bible studies can give us a lot of knowledge, but just knowing a lot of things about the Bible isn't going to change our lives. It's when we apply God's Word that we see the most impact.

For many of us, comparison has gotten a hold on our lives in a way that has caused us to pause. We've become numb to believing God has special, unique things just for us.

In Romans 12:4-8 we see something of the genius of God's design in putting all of us together in the church, each with a part to play and a gift to contribute, but none able to go it alone. He could have appointed just a few supermen and superwomen to do it all, but He didn't. If we are willing to do our parts and not compare how our parts measure up to someone else's, we just might find the thrill of being a functioning part of something much larger than ourselves. Plus, we'll likely come away with some great relationships added in for good measure.

Tomorrow we'll discover a key turning point in Jacob's story. But today, I believe, is a turning point for you and me. The more unsettled we allow ourselves to become with this comparison struggle, the more likely we are to overcome it. And the more honest we get about where we are, the more we'll see where we need to go. It's the struggles we stuff, ignore, or simply deny that never see the light of victory.

I want you to fill in the following time line of your comparison struggles. Note the starting point where this whole issue first popped up in your life. But where will it end?

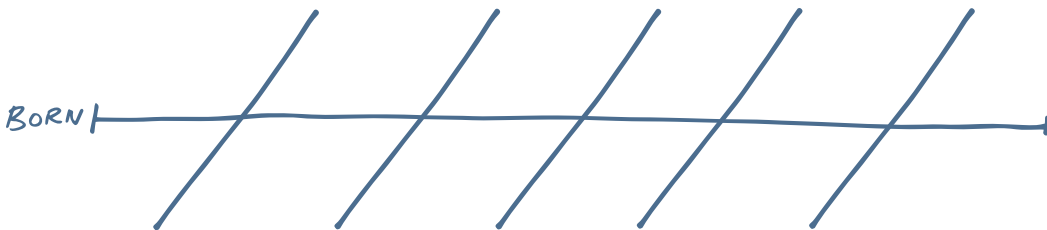
Jacob knew his destination was Haran. He didn't know what was in store for him there, but it was better than where he was.

And where God wants you and me to end up is much better than where we are now. He wants your destination to be freedom.

Take a few minutes to plot out your comparison journey. You can use the time line provided. But if you need more space, feel free to use a separate sheet. Here are some things you might want to plot out on your time line:

- Your first memory of comparison
- Other incidents of comparison
- Defining moments in your life, both positive and negative
- People who have influenced you along the way
- Lessons you've learned
- Things God revealed to you about this struggle

And as you think about the end: What might freedom from comparison look like? How will your life be different?



What are some practical steps that you can take to move you closer to freedom? I've filled in a few suggestions for you. Add some personal specifics below.

- Daily time with God
- Finding a solid community
- Replacing my comparison thoughts with a Combating Comparison Verse
- Staying focused on where I want to end up in life, not where others are headed
- Learning to express gratitude for what I have

-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-
-

I'm proud of you for taking the time to really work through this! I'll see you tomorrow as we continue our journey.

DAY THREE

HERE SHE COMES

“Do you know Laban grandson of Nahor?” Jacob asked them. They answered, “We know him.” “Is he well?” Jacob asked. “Yes,” they said, “and here is his daughter Rachel, coming with his sheep.”

GENESIS 29:5-6

PERSONAL PRAYER FOR TODAY'S STUDY:

If there was a playlist for this study, I'd start the lesson today by having you listen to Manfred Mann's "Do Wah Diddy Diddy."⁶ I mean, I totally give you permission to pause today's study, head to YouTube, and have a little dance party to that tune. It was the first song that popped in my head when I read the verses we are going to be unpacking today.

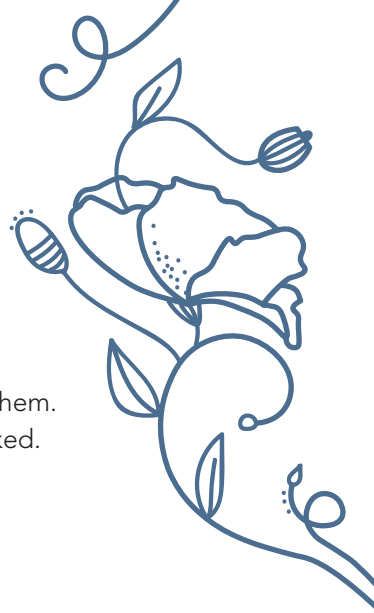
If Jacob had known that song, I bet it would have popped into his head too on that hot day at a well in Haran.

I once read that people make their judgments of you within seven seconds of meeting you.⁷ That's not much time! Maybe that's why a lot of people spend so much time on their clothes, makeup, hair, and such. Or maybe all the primping is because we feel the need to come off a little more impressive than we really are.

We're about to meet someone named Rachel, the daughter of a man named Laban. As she got up that morning, brushed her hair, and picked out her clothes for the day, she had no idea what was coming. If she had known, she might have spent a few extra moments getting ready. This day was going to be a defining moment for her.

LABAN FAST

FACTS: He was brother to Jacob's mom, Rebekah. First mentioned in Genesis 24:29-60. His occupation: Farmer.



READ GENESIS 29:5-9.

Have you ever heard of Laban before this study? Circle your answer.

Yes No

According to verse 5, who was Laban's grandfather?

Turn to Genesis 11:26. Who was one of the grandfather's brothers?

Circle the right answer.

- A. Isaac
- B. Joseph
- C. Abram

In Genesis 29:7, why was Jacob so surprised Rachel was bringing her sheep to the well?

FUN FACT:

Rachel is the first shepherdess mentioned in the Bible.⁹

I'm not sure we can make much of a point about the time of day they were coming to the well. They might have done things a lot differently five hundred miles away, where Jacob was from. But one commentary suggested that Jacob's comment was him trying to get the herdsmen to go away so he could talk with Rachel.⁸

What was Rachel's job?

I love this moment when Rachel walked up to the well. It's both beautiful and interesting. It's a sovereign moment. Yes, Jacob would have eventually met Rachel, but the fact that she met him here at this well creates a lovely story line for us.

It reminds us that life is full of unexpected moments. Normally we think of these unexpected things in a negative light—an ill-timed flat tire on the way to work, an unexpected medical bill, an intense phone call, or a leaky roof.

However, God has the best surprises in life for us. Unfortunately, comparison keeps our eyes on ourselves in such a way that we can sometimes miss what's happening right in front of us. The more honest we become with God and with ourselves, the easier we'll get to a place where we reject comparison and receive confidence.



MID-WEEK TRUTH CHECK-IN

TRUTH ONE: You need to be honest.

Each week I'm giving you a truth your soul needs to hear to help combat comparison. These truths, lined up with God's Word, will give you the strength to fight this internal enemy of comparison a little more each day.

Our first truth: ***You need to be honest.***

I know this sounds incredibly basic, and maybe you're rolling your eyes at this not-so-profound truth. It's simple, yes. But until we get honest about this struggle, we'll continue to live in denial. Knowing truth and living truth are two different things.

It's time to dismiss denial and dishonesty and invite honesty to the struggle. Only then can God begin to transform us.

Today, we're going to start applying Scripture to this week's Truth.

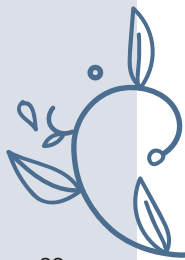
Fill in the blanks for our verse this week:

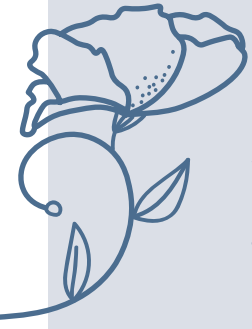
LORD, _____ have _____ me and _____ me.

Psalm 139:1

Read and write down Psalm 139:23 as a prayer for this time of reflection.

One of the best ways to know if we have thoughts and emotions that are not pleasing to God is to ask Him to search us. We can't hide from God (Heb. 4:13). But the kindness of His presence often brings us to a place of repentance.





When you think of God searching your heart right now, what is something you might be fearful of Him seeing when it comes to this struggle of comparison?

What are the good things God sees in your heart?

What are the longings or desires God sees in your heart?

Jacob also needed to get honest with himself and with God. Back in Genesis 25 and 27, we saw his dishonest struggles unfold. But before he arrived at this well, Jacob had an undeniably defining moment—an encounter with God.

Sometimes encounters with God leave us warm and fuzzy, and sometimes they leave us with a desire to do some deep soul-searching. Jacob's encounter led to the latter.

One day, while Jacob was traveling from Beer-sheba to Haran, he had to take a break to sleep. Something incredible happened while he was sleeping.

READ GENESIS 28:10-22.

What did Jacob use to lay his head on?

Describe his dream.

What did Jacob name this place?

What vow did Jacob make?

- A. That he would apologize to Esau.
- B. That the Lord would be his God.
- C. That he would find a wife.
- D. That he would never lie again.

In this fast-paced world, we find ourselves running through each day. It's hard to create space for encounters with God. There's so much information buzzing in our brains all day.

FAST FACT:

There are twenty-one dreams recorded in the Bible.¹⁰

Sometimes God gifts us with the grace to be honest in His presence. We are able to see ourselves in the light of truth. This honest assessment helps keep our momentary mistakes from turning into long-term failures.

Describe a time you had an undeniable encounter with God.

Turn to John 10:14, and fill in the following blanks.

"I am the _____."

Wait. Are you seeing what I'm seeing? Jacob has this undeniable encounter with God and is then led to this amazing providential moment at the well—where there are literally sheep showing up! God, the Good Shepherd, has guided Jacob to this exact moment.

But it only came after one of the most gut-level honest moments Jacob had with God. There were things God needed to show Jacob that were keeping Jacob from experiencing all that God had for him.

And fortunately, until the day we arrive in heaven, we are also in this process of God revealing things to us that need to be revealed. Though it can be painful, it is necessary. Comparison has brought a lot of compromise in our lives. It may not be our only struggle, but it's at the root of a lot of them.

Yesterday, I wanted you to get a taste of what it would be like to see yourself in the future, a little more free from this comparison struggle. Today, as we wrap up this idea of being honest with yourself and with God, take the time to realize where you are in the process. Remember how Jacob's defining moment led to the next step in his journey.

HERE'S A PRAYER I'M PRAYING FOR BOTH OF US:

Father, as we lean into this story of Jacob's defining moment, we know that You have defining moments for each of us. We ask You to show us our Bethels, the places where we have undeniable encounters with You, which lead to the beginning of our struggles ending. Holy Spirit, reveal what needs to be revealed, and give us the gift of grace wrapped in honesty.

DAY FOUR

AWKWARD ENTRIES

Then Jacob kissed Rachel and wept loudly.

GENESIS 29:11

PERSONAL PRAYER FOR TODAY'S STUDY:

I seem to be the queen of awkward entries. I've had a slew of them in my lifetime. The worst example I can think of was the time I walked into a room full of people and fell flat on my face.

That morning, because I was running late for an event where I was teaching, I grabbed the first pair of shoes I could find, white sandals. It had rained that morning, and the parking lot was full of puddles. Hurrying to get in the building, my feet splashed in puddle after puddle. When I came dashing into the room my wet shoes met with the recently-waxed floors. *Disaster*. My first introduction was my face greeting the floor. No one in the room knew what to do, and it became one of the most awkward moments of my entire life.

I'm sure you've had a moment or two like this? Please, tell me you have?

As we pick back up with our story of Jacob, he is about to have his own little awkward entry.

READ GENESIS 29:9-11.

According to verse 10, what does Jacob do as soon as he sees Rachel?



LARGE
STONE
LID



I smile when I picture this moment. Because men will always be men.

Maybe Jacob was being a perfect gentleman. Or maybe he was also being a little bit of a show-off. As you can see from the picture, removing this stone wasn't like popping the lid off a spaghetti sauce jar. It took a lot of strength.

Most commentaries I studied said there were probably several reasons why the well was covered up in the first place. It could have been because they didn't want any sheep falling in.¹¹ It also could have been to protect the well,¹² to keep it from drying up or becoming contaminated by something.¹³

Whatever the reason, the stone that covered it was heavy. It would take a strong man to move it. Perhaps Jacob was ready to show Rachel he had that kind of strength.

Go back and read Genesis 29:2. How many flocks of sheep does it say were already at the well? Circle the best answer.

- A. Five
- B. Ten
- C. Three

Why do you think the other shepherds hadn't already moved the stone to water their sheep? Circle the answer you think it might be.

- A. They were being lazy.
- B. The stone was too heavy.
- C. It was too hot.
- D. They were waiting for all the flocks to arrive so the water wouldn't get contaminated.

Honestly, it could have been a number of reasons. We don't know one hundred percent. But what we do know is Jacob took the initiative and moved that stone.

A little showing off isn't too out of character for a man, even in today's society. But what happens next puzzles me a bit.

Reread Genesis 29:11, and write what it says Jacob did.

This is one of the places in Scripture we have to take a little closer look to really understand what's happening. Yes, Jacob just straight-up kissed Rachel. But this wasn't a big, romantic, smoochy-type kiss. It was very common for people in this area to greet each other with kisses.

When I was first getting to know my husband's family, I felt really uncomfortable. Every time we would say goodbye to them, they would always kiss me on the cheek. And I was like, "Um, ya, I don't even know you. This is weird."

I'm not a real touchy-type person. I like my personal space, and it just felt really awkward to say goodbye to someone like this—it felt awkward for *years*.

Kris's family members are Southern transplants. They are originally from New York, and this is a very common practice for them. But for us Southerners, it feels strange. We're huggers, mostly side huggers. But after understanding their background and their upbringing, it made me feel less uncomfortable. What is called kissing in much of the world does not involve a lot of physical contact. It is the air kiss just to the side of the face. In some places (like Ethiopia) there are three kisses—one on one side, one on the other side, and then another kiss on the first side.

What are some other cultural differences you can think of across the United States or the world?

So, the kissing, maybe we can wrap our minds around. However, Jacob's crying? Now, that was a bit interesting. For sure.

Why do you think Jacob wept when he saw Rachel?

I'm guessing it was a combination of things. "Jacob was a quiet man, dwelling in tents" (Gen. 25:27, ESV). He stayed at home, so he probably was not a traveler. After he had just completed a five hundred mile journey, he would have been exhausted and lonely. He was probably also wondering if he would find his mother's family so far away from home and if there would be anyone there he could marry. So perhaps the combination of fatigue, loneliness, and anxiety combined to make him especially emotional. Then when he saw a relative, his mother's niece, he was overjoyed.

READ GENESIS 29:12.

What was Rachel's response?

Something made her eager to get home quickly to her father. Maybe Jacob was an answer to Rachel's hopes and dreams. Maybe she was in shock. Whatever it was, nothing would ever be the same for Rachel or her family from this moment on. Another defining moment on the story radar.

In these first four days we've built the foundation for our study of Rachel and Leah. Tomorrow, we begin our study of *you*. That's right, friend. I'm so excited to help you uncover all the unique and incredible things about who God has created you to be.

As we wrap up this week's study of Rachel and Leah, I want you to remember the key points.

List all the characters we were introduced to this week. (Hint, there are six people and one group of people.)

List at least three defining moments we've uncovered in this story:

1.

2.

3.

How did our Combating Comparison Verse of the week (Psalm 139:1) help you uncover your comparison battle?

Okay! High fives all around. You did it. One week of study complete.



DAY FIVE (OPTIONAL)

YOU BE YOU

What kind of Bible study girl are you?

1. Your favorite type of Bible studies are:
 - A. Verse-by-verse studies through a book of the Bible
 - B. Studies on faith, courage, and victory
 - C. Anything within the Psalms
 - D. Anything within Proverbs

2. You participate in group time by:
 - A. Listening carefully
 - B. Offering new ideas or new perspectives
 - C. Affirming/agreeing with others in their responses
 - D. Having an answer prepared in case you're called upon

3. You'll do your personal study:
 - A. Carefully, slowly, and thoughtfully
 - B. While also checking in with the other ladies in class
 - C. At the same time each day
 - D. Honestly, you might not, but if you do, it'll be deep

4. When you look at your Bible study book or page:
 - A. It contains others' prayer requests that you jotted down.
 - B. You've got action steps or things you want to do.
 - C. It's neat and tidy.
 - D. You have other verses on the same subject in the sidebar.

5. If you have a question during the week, you will:
 - A. Text a friend from class
 - B. Dig into the Greek or Hebrew word meaning
 - C. Creatively come up with a few different answers
 - D. Look it up on the Internet

RESULTS:

Question 1	Question 2	Question 3	Question 4	Question 5
A. 1	A. 4	A. 4	A. 3	A. 3
B. 2	B. 2	B. 3	B. 2	B. 4
C. 3	C. 3	C. 1	C. 1	C. 2
D. 4	D. 1	D. 2	D. 4	D. 1

MOSTLY 1s

You are the Delightfully Devoted Bible Study Girl!

On time and ready to go, you are consistent. You find joy in having every page complete and every blank filled in. Other ladies can count on you.

MOSTLY 2s

You are the True Trailblazer Bible Study Girl!

You've got ideas! You've got bravado! You are ready to inspire! It's hard to hold you back during Bible study. Your input and enthusiasm are epic!

MOSTLY 3s

You are the Cheerful Encourager Bible Study Girl!

You want to be positive and build others up. You enjoy fellowship, hugs, and conversation. You will be the first to pass the tissues if someone starts crying.

MOSTLY 4s

You are the Wise Observer Bible Study Girl!

You are a serious scholar and internal processor. You like to mull things over and hear other people's responses before chiming in. You keep the group anchored.

