

# The Long Road Home

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[ 0 : 00 ] This message was recorded at Vision Baptist Church in Alfred, Georgia. It is our prayer that you will be blessed by the preaching of God's Word. Thank you, Bibles. If you want to open them to Genesis chapter 29. Genesis chapter 29.

Let me tell you a Bible story. Well, I think we have a shame baby here tonight. Do I see a shame baby here? Hold your hand up there, Michael Shane. So, everybody, hold your hand up, Mike. There you go.

Thank you, Sandy. All right, how about that round of applause for little Susan? Glad to see you guys here tonight. Boy, thank God she turned out better looking than her daddy.

Say amen right there. All right, glad you guys are here tonight. And glad to see little Susan here. This newest attendee at Vision. What can I say? In every way she's the newest.

All right. Genesis chapter 29. We're going to go through three chapters, 20 years, and 30 minutes. And that's about how fast you'll feel like your life passes by sooner or later.

[ 0 : 58 ] Jacob is a great man. God's going to use him big time. He has big plans for his life. But he's a long ways from where he needs to be.

And he's on a journey. And, you know, we can read this and see history. We can read this and realize something that goes on in my very life. And that is that God is forming me and molding me and making me in what I think of as routine, everyday life.

I'm kind of like, you know, I'm just a regular guy living a regular life. I'm out taking care of my sheep. I just got me a wife. I'm just living a normal life. But God was making a man.

God is making a man. And so, you know, you've got Abraham and Isaac and Jacob. And Jacob is going to be greatly used of God. And let me kind of tell you the story.

I don't think there's any way we'll read three chapters and be through on time. But if you've got your Bible, you can scan along if you want. In Genesis chapter 29 and verse 1, Jacob went on his journey.

[ 2 : 02 ] He left home. You remember the story. He left home. He has deceived his dad. He has stolen from his brother. What his brother feels like was rightfully his. And he's traveled several hundred miles now.

And he comes to Laban's house. And he gets out there where the shepherds are. And there's three flocks. And Rachel, Laban's daughter, comes out there. And old Jacob just thinks she is a beauty.

He sees her, falls in love with her immediately. And he wants to know why they're not watering the sheep. And she says, well, we're not able to because we can't get the rock off there.

Probably young shepherd boys. And he looks at her and says, baby, you're worth me moving a rock off the top of a well. He takes the rock off the well. After he saw Rachel in verse 10.

In verse 11, he kissed her. That's a nice thing about that culture. Amen. You get to kiss before you even know her. It's like shaking hands. And I think most guys probably enjoy that.

[ 3 : 02 ] Don't they, Argentine missionary? Amen. Amen. And 12, Jacob told her about the family. And verse 14, Laban says, man, we're akin to each other.

And he's been there about a month. And Laban says, you know, you're staying here at the house. You're part of the family. Glad to have you here. But if you're going to stay over 30 days, I ought to pay you so you can work.

Or maybe he was already working. But he's going to pay him. And says, what do you want for pay? And he says, well, man, I really like the looks of Rachel. And I'd like to see about marrying Rachel. And he says, well, if you work seven years.

And he never even promises in the story. Never noticed until this time. He never really says. He said, it would be better if I gave her to you than it would to anybody else. He never said, I'll give her to you. And so Jacob goes to work.

And he works for seven years to get Rachel. And then they have the party. And, of course, she's modestly covered. I mean, like a Muslim lady. Don't see her.

[ 3 : 59 ] It's dark. And it's a drinking party. And so he doesn't know until the next morning when he wakes up. I married Leah, the ugly one. I wanted Rachel.

And I am stuck with this girl. And it really works in Spanish. Leah Lafea. It just really works. Leah, the ugly girl. He's married her. And he says in verse 25, you have tricked me.

Kind of interesting that the trickster just got tricked. Kind of interesting that the guy who deceived trying to be somebody else just got deceived right back. In verse 27, he has to give her her week.

You know, they get this party going on. It's going to last a week. He probably feels like the court fool because everybody knows old Jacob has married the wrong girl. And every day they're drinking and eating and partying and having a blast.

And he's waiting for the week. And then he gets to marry Rachel. Not 14 years later, a week, seven years and a week later, he finally gets to marry Rachel. And in verse 31, it says he hated Leah.

[ 5 : 01 ] Well, I don't think he really hates her because they keep having babies. So I don't think he hates her, hates her. But he sure doesn't like her. And I'm sure she felt hated. And so she's excited about having children.

In Genesis chapter 30 and verse 1, he says, Rachel finally is so fed up with it. She says, give me children or I die. I'd rather be dead than to not have children.

And Jacob got kind of angry, kind of like husbands do when wives ask them to do things. It's not in their pay grade. You're not able to handle that. And she wants him to handle it.

And he looks at her and he says, woman, do you think I'm the one that decides if you have babies or not? That's God's department. He opens the womb and he closes the womb. And I'm not able to do that. So then you have children.

There's all this competition going on. The two sisters each have a handmaid. They are giving their handmaid as a secondary wife, a concubine. One day one of the kids comes out and he finds this aphrodisiac plant, the mandrake.

[ 6 : 02 ] And he comes in, shows it to his mama and his mama. The other lady wants it and she says, I'll let you have the plant, but you've got to let me sleep with our husband tonight. It's a messed up family.

At the end of 14 years, about verse 25, it says that Jacob says, hey Laban, I've worked long enough. I've got my wives. Send me away. Give me my wives.

Give me my children that I've served you for. It's been 14 years to let me go. And Laban says in verse 27, you know, I figured it out. God has really blessed me because of you. I mean, I'm doing pretty good because of you.

And I'm wondering what you'd like me to pay you so you can stay. And so they make a decision that he gets all the off-colored animals. And you know the story.

He separates them by three days and takes out those. And then he starts his games again. And he says God told him to in a dream. But he puts these poles. He takes saplings and cuts them in different things and puts them in front of the cows or the sheep so that the stronger ones conceive there.

[ 7 : 06 ] And he grows richer and richer and richer. And six more years go by. And he tells his wives, I think we better get out of here. Your daddy don't like me. Your brothers are beginning to like me less and less every day because I'm getting richer and richer.

And they're getting poorer and poorer because anytime the strong sheep get ready to have babies, I make sure they're going to be my babies. The ones that come to our house and not his. And he said God's taking care of me.

In verse 5, your dad is a bum. He's changed my wages ten times. Plus he stuck me with you, Leah. He didn't say that part. But I would have been thinking that. Amen.

And he said God showed me in a dream. And verse 13, God said to him, he said, I am the God of Bethel where thou anointest the pillar and where thou vowest a vow.

I'm the God where you poured the oil on the rocks and you made me a promise. Now get up and go back home. And so he talks to his wives. They make up their mind to leave. And dear Rachel steals her daddy's gods and hides them.

[ 8 : 07 ] Daddy comes, takes him seven days to catch them. And Jacob gets out of town, gets a head start, three-day head start. And Laban figures it out and takes off running and catches him and comes in and says, I want my gods.

You at least have to steal my gods. And the only reason he wasn't going to hurt Jacob was because God told him in a dream, you leave him alone. That's my guy. He's my man. You leave him alone.

He goes in, looks around the houses, can't find the babies. Because Rachel says, well, the custom of women's on me. I can't get up, Dad. You know I'm not supposed to stand up with you in this position that I'm in the condition I am this month or this time of the month.

And so you're not, I can't stand up. And he said, well, one of y'all stole my gods. And Jacob says, well, you killed the one that stole your gods. You could just kill her. Just kill whoever did it. He has no idea that his favorite wife has done that.

And he's been 20 years away from home. Verse 40, he says, the drought and the frost and sleep I have paid to get what I have. You've changed everything.

[ 9 : 08 ] And they make an agreement. And he goes home. So I want to walk through with you just a few truths I think are in this three chapters. I think we could have taken and gone through really slowly and looked at a lot of things.

But I think there's a big, there's some big, broad things. 20 years. Jacob, the guy who's a trickster. Next chapter, old Jacob's going to meet with an angel and get his life really sorted out.

But God uses little breakings in my life to get me ready for when he wants to use me. I believe you're God's man. And I believe God wants to use you. And you may not be a pastor.

And it's easy for you to say, well, he's a pastor. He's a missionary. What he says works for them. But the truth is it works for all of us. God's doing a work in our life. And God's forming us. We were told in Romans 8, 28, all things work together for good.

All things work together to them that love God. Not to them that are called to be pastors. And then they're called according to his purposes. Not to them that are called according to be pastors. But to all of his. So he has predestined us to be conformed to the image of his son.

[10:12] He's working in my life. And I can watch through Jacob's life. And I can see God at work getting him ready. Biggest problem old Jacob's got is Jacob.

It's not Esau. It's not his mama. And it's not his daddy. And it's not his past. And all that. It's him. That's his biggest. He runs. But he can't run away.

He's gone 20 years. But he can't get away from it. There's some things. It seems like you never learn from preaching. Some things you never learn from teaching.

And some things you never learn from discipleship. Some things you just need God to kind of pop you in the top of the head. And say, oh, dingbat. Listen to me. I'm trying to tell you something. Now we're going to cover 20 years.

I'm going to jump through them quickly. But I wish you'd consider that God's at work in your life. And God is building you in everyday life. And all the things you do on a regular, everyday life.

[11:07] In fact, it's where you've been and what you've been going through. And God doesn't have some special elite force. They're the pastors and the missionaries. We're all his. We're all priests.

We're all kings. We're all servants. We're all anointed. I'm not some special guy. I'm just one of the guys. There's only one special guy at our church. And his name is Jesus.

And the rest of us are just a bunch of servants. Say amen right there. So don't take this story and say, well, if we were Jacob, the great servant, this guy's a shepherd. This guy's taking care of sheep.

This guy stinks. They couldn't even move the rock off there. And he came. It must have been a lot of little kids and a girl. Now he's in charge of that. So if you would walk through it with me.

Number one is marriage. He gets married. He gets married. And I don't take the time to go through that. That's chapter 29 and verse 18. He loves Rachel.

[12:03] And he wants to marry her. He's got to do that. That's part of God's plan for his life. He's going to get married because God has a big plan for him. He's going to have a whole bunch of kids. He's going to go get married.

And mama told him to go get married. And he meets Rachel. And he's excited about it. And I'm just going to jump from this one really quick. But you know God's going to use the spouse he puts in our lives. And in the New Testament by the way.

There's some very strong teaching about marriage. Just real quickly. You know Jesus when he talked about marriage. He said. You two people are going to get married over there. You know what he told him.

He said. Boy and girl to get married. Two to become one. And stay married. That's three big truths. That's probably the best thing I see going in old Jacob's life right now.

He at least loves this woman. Was willing to work seven years like nothing. The second thing I want you to look at quickly. Chapter 29 and verse 19 is. Two tricksters run head to head.

[13:01] Two deceivers. Two guys. Who work at being the biggest cheats in town. And they meet. Verse 19. And Laban said it's better that I give her to thee than I should give her to another man.

So hang out here with me. Stay here. And he starts the deception. And old Jacob ends up working 14 years. He's going to be there 20 years. He works 14 years to get the one woman he wants.

Said he gets another woman thrown in as extra. That was two for one sale. And each of them came with another one. So he ends up with four wives before it's over. Something that's really funny before the story is going to end.

Before the story is going to end. When Laban lets them leave. He says all right. Now you listen to me. We're putting this rock up here. Because I want you to know. Bless God. I'm a good father-in-law. And if you hurt my girls.

I'm coming after you. He said so. You make your word right here at Mizpah. And you say you're not going to do that. And the second thing I'm telling you. Is you can't marry anybody else but my daughters. I already gave him two extra girls.

[ 14 : 00 ] I thought that was kind of funny myself. Next there's a big truth here. And I think that you and I need to understand this in life. Do you know you're reaping what you're sowing? I'm reaping what I'm sowing.

And that's a story that I think is found here. He dressed to deceive his dad. And now the wrong woman's dressed to deceive him. The wrong woman may have walked and acted like her sister.

I think probably old Leah was taught by her dad. Like Jacob had been taught by his mom. Now when you go out there baby. You got to walk this way. You got to walk like your little sister. You got to put on the Rachel air.

You got to act like Rachel. Wear Rachel's perfume. Wear Rachel's clothes. We got to deceive him. He's kind of half lit. But he ain't lit enough. He'll be drunk by morning. But you got to deceive him.

He took advantage of the firstborn himself. But Laban won't let him take advantage of the firstborn. He's the fool at his own party for seven days. Deceived and tricked just like he did his dad.

[ 15 : 01 ] He's at a party all week long. That leads him to a broken fighting family like the one he ran from. Amazing. You want to get away. I want to leave my big brother.

I want to leave my mom and dad and all the fussing and fighting. And he gets married to four women in 14 weeks. Lord help me.

Jesus. I don't know much about marriage. I've only been married 40 years. But I promise you if he's married to four women I believe it's like 200 years to be married that long.

Or you'd be dead. Amen. He's married to four women. And Rachel's griping because she wants a baby. And God's up in heaven saying look you married the first woman.

Treat her right. I'll stop here just a second. You know I read through this. I'm trying to think. Do you ever consider that some of you married a woman and you're not treating her right. Because well maybe you don't think she's the perfect will of God.

[ 16 : 00 ] And maybe you stepped out. And maybe you kind of messed up. And maybe it would have been better if you could have married up to Susie Q. Or Judy too. And if you'd have married that person you'd have been better off.

You know you're just thinking. I'm not sure. Isn't it amazing God said I'll let Leah have kids. And I won't let Rachel. You did marry Leah.

You did say the vows. You are married to her. You ever think you'll just love your wife and quit acting like if she don't give me what I want I don't love her. Anyway. Rachel's dying to have a child.

I'm going to stop and just say this. And as I go through it I'll get here in just a second. Give you some points and let you go. But Rachel's dying to have a child. I've never read that verse. I don't think about me. This is not what the Bible verse is about.

She says I want a child. If I can't have children I'd die. Did you know that I really think that ought to be your heartbeat spiritually for a minute. This is Austin Gardnerizing.

[17:00] I'm Austin Gardnerizing. Gardnerizing this text. So I'll just bluntly tell you. I don't know how you read that as a Christian and don't think to yourself I want to make a difference in somebody's life with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

I want to have a spiritual son. I want to have a spiritual daughter. One man prayed over Scotland and said God give me Scotland or I die. And there ought to be in our heart a desire.

And I'd just like to challenge you a second about foundations. I'd like to challenge you a second about really getting involved in somebody's life. In our day and time it's good for a woman to be selfish and never have any children.

Get her a job. Make a lot of money. And don't have kids because kids get in the way and they cut into your income and they make your waistline spread. But in the Bible days having children was the blessing of God on your life.

Say amen. Having kids was the blessing of God on your life. Rachel can't have any children. Rachel can't have any children. And Rachel said man I want to have kids. And I'm afraid one of the big weaknesses in our churches today is the number of times we come to church.

[18:09] And man we've accepted the thing that I'm never going to make a real difference. I'm sure glad I'm a part of a church where everybody, all these guys are missionaries. I'm sure glad I'm a part of a church where there's a couple of laymen in the church that are really excited about discipling people.

I'm really excited about teaching Sunday school. But I'm just kind of like a hang around. I hang on. I ride along. I'm along for the ride. But I'm not really involved in it. You should develop a Rachel prayer.

God give me somebody. God give me somebody or I die. God give me somebody or I die. Before I leave that can I just say that probably one of the big things I think that's a lesson that can be learned here.

There ought not be any competition in marriage. There ought not be using of intimacy to gain control or manipulate. And of course there ought to be no intimacy with someone outside of your spouse.

And true intimacy only comes with full acceptance, love, giving, and dying to yourself. Jacob's paid for his wife.

[19:18] He's ready to go. Skip all that. He's gone his way home. It's been 20 years. In chapter 31 and verse 38, it's been 20 years that he's been there. He spent 14 years getting wives. Six years getting sheep.

Cattle and riches. And Laban isn't happy with him. And he's going to leave. And there's some big truths I would just like to show you quickly before we leave. This is the real crux of the whole deal.

The story outside the story. Number one, running never works. Running never works. I don't know what Jacob thought except he knew he had to get out of Dodge because his brother was ready to kill him.

His daddy was now upset. His mother was afraid she was going to lose both kids in a day. And she basically does. But listen to me. When you have a problem, running from it only carries it with you.

Running from it only carries it with you. And Jacob will spend the next 20 years. And the drought will get him. And the sun will get him. And the cold will get him. And not sleeping will get him.

[ 20 : 21 ] And he's paying a price for 20 years. And all 20 years, finally, what he realizes now, Laban doesn't like me. My family doesn't like me. There's only one place I really need. I've got to go home. In the next chapter, we're going to watch him as he's headed home.

Terrified of what his brother's going to do to him. 20 years later, you can't run. It's a long journey home. You can't run. Number two, your biggest problem always goes with you.

This goes against everything that we always hear from our psychology buddies. You could take a pill to solve your problem. You could blame it on your mother. But you are your biggest problem.

I am Austin Gardner's biggest problem. I'll go another one for you. I'm the biggest problem in this room for this church. I am the chief of sinners. That's where you need to change your attitude.

I am the problem. Third thing I wish you'd notice here is God is at work in your life, building the man he's going to use. I looked at these chapters. I go through them and say, Lord, what am I supposed to preach here?

[ 21 : 23 ] You just want me to tell the story? You want me to go talk to the story about how pretty she was and how he worked seven years together and how his father-in-law deceived him? You want me to tell the story? What's the story here? What's the point that I know you want me to make out of that passage?

You know what I really think it is? Jacob's going to be the man. But Jacob's a messed up guy. You're going to be the man. You're the woman. You're a husband. You're a dad.

You're a wife. You're a mother. You have responsibility. You're a Sunday school teacher. And if I could get anything across to you, please don't accept the fact that, well, all those mysteries paraded up here, boy, they're the ones God uses.

This guy's a shepherd. He was 77 years old when he went to get the blessing. He's 97 years old now. Don't get the idea we're talking about some, there's only, God only uses these special people.

God's working in your life. He has a plan for you. You're not just scenery. You're not just a decoration on the wall like God's got a job for Austin to do.

[ 22 : 32 ] I hate it when I hear these preachers say, not everybody will go to the mission field. Got to have some people to stay here. You know, not everybody will go to the mission field, but we don't need you to stay here. We need you to serve here. There's a major difference.

We don't need you to stay here. They ain't like, well, if everybody goes to the mission field, who's Austin preached to? That's the dumbest thing I've ever heard. I hear the all-time missions conferences. Don't all y'all go to the mission field? Preachers need somebody to preach to. Really?

I don't know where they got that. That's dumb as a rock. Everybody ought to be being used to God. Everybody ought to realize that you're a man of God today. God will take however long it takes to take you down whatever road is necessary to get you ready.

20 years. 20 years. Half as long as Betty and I have been married. 20 years. As long as I was improved.

20 years to get Jacob ready. And he doesn't seem to be in a hurry. He'll use all... We must all use up our resources and get to the end of ourselves before he can and will show his power.

[ 23 : 35 ] 20 years to get to the end of our life.

He can sense it there and he says, Oh, you're a weak sheep. You can't breed here. I don't need you. He's got a... I mean, him and the Lord working this thing out. He's getting rich. This guy's smart. This guy's...

He might have married the wrong woman, but he had a bunch of youngins. Everything's going his way. Next chapter, he's going to meet an angel and limp the rest of his life. You know, you and I...

God is not going to work in our lives till we get rid of us. Till we come to the end of ourselves. You might have a lot of stuff and ability, but sooner or later, it'll be obvious that it's not what gets the job done.

God will not share his glory with anyone, including us. I'm personally convinced that the Bible teaches and my experience teaches that God is an extremely jealous God.

[ 24 : 59 ] And he does not like anybody. Oh, it says that in the Bible. The jealous part, that's clear in the Bible. He doesn't like anybody getting any glory. Hey, if we win...

If we win the pennant, if we're the best hockey team and we get the cup or whatever we get, you know what we're going to do when we get it? We're not going to be dancing around and acting like we're something.

We're going to be handing it to the guy who got it. We know who got it. We know who won. And what happens is God does not against you having a lot of stuff. God doesn't want us to all live like poverty-stricken people.

He just wants us to know something. My life's about him. I might be a shepherd, but my life's about him. I might be buying wives, but my life's about him. I might be taking care of sheep, but my life's about him.

By the way, having a strong marriage is a very important part of God's plan. There wouldn't have been 12 youngins, and there wouldn't have been the tribes of Israel. And that takes a lot of work.

[ 26 : 01 ] And I would just throw this one in for you. Don't try to run from your marriage. Work on your marriage. You know what keeps marriages together?

You know what the best thing to keep marriages together is? Get rid of the word divorce. Get rid of the word separated. Get rid of anything that says there's an out. If you're stuck and you can't get separated, you'll fix the problem.

So be stuck. I'm stuck with Betty, and she's stuck with me. And that means I've got to fix some stuff, and she's got to fix some stuff, but we're going to stick together. There's always someone that can out-deceive you, out-trick you, take advantage of people more than you can.

I think that's a great lesson here. I think Jacob, probably on the way across the desert, I don't know how many people are traveling with him. I don't know if he's all by himself. He finds that girl, opens the well.

He's excited. Boy, he thinks I got it knocked. I think he thinks, watch this, I got some good plans here. And old Laban is like one big cheater.

[ 27 : 06 ] Seven years, it seemed like a day or two for him. And he wakes up the next morning and looks at her and says, I am not believing this. He cheated me.

You are not the biggest cheat. You are not going to get away with it. I would like to throw this one in. Three minutes. I'll be finished. Three minutes.

I thank God that though we reap what we sow, somebody else reaped the majority of what we sow and he just lets us deal with some consequences. So for you to know, you know what the grace of God did?



All the major junk that I've really messed up on, he already took that, didn't he? Every mess up you made has already been put on Calvary. Nothing's going to separate you from the love of God.

Jesus reaped on Calvary what we sowed when we were acting silly. But you will reap. How many marriages are messed up because we're acting like Leah or we're acting like Rachel or we're acting like Jacob and we're deceived?

[ 28 : 08 ] How many of us are messed up because we have allowed bitterness to creep into our heart and we're angry with people and we treat people that way and all this division, all this junk that's going on here is showing up in our marriage.

Intimacy requires openness and trust. Get rid of manipulation, deceit and tricks and guilt in your marriage and you're the only one that can fix your marriage.

I would like to say to friends I have and people I love, your marriage is worth whatever it costs you to keep it good. And your spouse is worth it. And you'll not enjoy the sweetness of some of the older marriages in the church and you'll not enjoy the sweetness and the wonderful things that God has for marriage if you don't pay the price while you have a chance.

Two last things. To me, he never left Jacob. That's amazing to me. This guy's an idiot. I mean, if I was God, I would have said, bye-bye, Jake.

You done messed up. Cheated your mom and daddy. Cheated your brother. You're a mom and you are a chiefs together. But you're gone. Then he gets over and starts trying to pull his trickery. But in the middle of all his mess, Jacob, I didn't have time to show you the verses, but Jacob says this, he's been with me.

[ 29 : 29 ] You know where you are right now? He's with you. You begin to think he doesn't love you. He's not working in your life. He is working in your life. If you're born again, he will not ever leave you. And when you're feeling the most alone, he will not leave you.

No matter how far away you get from home, no matter how much you messed up, no matter how far you get gone, he will still be there. Last one. Every circumstance, he was working in it.

Every circumstance. What looked like a mess, God is already working in it. What looks like a mess, God is already working in it.

People hurt you. I know you've been hurt. You can't live in this world without getting hurt. You got hurt. But God's at work even in that hurt. I know people have done you wrong. But God's at work in that.

He's even going to use that to sweeten you and to fix you to be a bigger blessing. Listen, let God use your life. So I leave you with this.

[ 30 : 32 ] Don't you dare walk out of this room thinking, I'm just a regular guy. I'm not one of those preachers. God's not at work in my life. We got a 97-year-old shepherd here.

Not a preacher. I don't know of any books of the Bible he wrote. But he raised some kids. And he loved some wives.

Don't do that, please. That's not for you. Nobody needs to love wives in here. Just love one. Say amen. Just love one. But God was working in his life. Let God work.

Next chapter, Sunday night, already working on it. Boy, the final kaboom is coming when God says, Jacob, I've been messing with you, buddy, helping you slowly see it.

But I don't let people just get away with it. If you're mine, I will work on you. Father in heaven, I love you. I thank you for the chance to serve you. I pray that your name would be honored and glorified in this time.

[ 31 : 33 ] I give you praise for it all. In Jesus' name, amen. This message was recorded at Vision Baptist Church in Alfred, Georgia. For more information, log on to [www.visionbaptist.com](http://www.visionbaptist.com) where you can find our service times, location, contact information, and more audio and video recordings.