

Diary of a Desperate Housewife

In the Bible, Leah found fulfillment when she stopped looking to her husband, Jacob, for satisfaction and started looking to God.

They thought she was fast asleep, but Leah heard everything: Rachel's flirtatious invitation, Jacob's coy reply and the hushed sounds of her husband stealing a moment of passion with his other wife. Though Leah loved Jacob desperately, she felt completely invisible to him. Her desperation to attract her husband's attention was so intense that it often blurred the line between real life and wishful thinking.

Had Jacob stolen a glance at me the other day? she wondered. Did he wink approvingly, or am I imagining it again? Leah's heart ached to be desired by the only man she had ever loved.

As the older, less attractive of two sisters, Leah had been forced on Jacob by her father. She was his first wife but would never be his first love (see Gen. 29:15-35).

How do you survive emotionally in an environment in which you know you're unloved? As a pastor, I've seen many women face this heartbreak.

Some are wives who go to desperate ends to win the love of their indifferent husbands. Others are single and feel invisible to men in the church. They wonder what might happen if they relaxed their spiritual standards and got out more—would anyone notice them then?

Many women deal with the devastating lie that they are

unattractive and unwanted by building protective walls around their hearts. They shield themselves with the busyness of a career, the refuge of perfectionism or the comfort of some guilty self-indulgence.

When the isolation becomes too painful, they might resort to provoking a conflict with the men they love, hoping to prompt a breakthrough. Others may run away, praying to be pursued. Nearly all struggle with sadness because their attempts to write a new life-script always wind down to the same tragic ending: They are alone, unseen, unloved.

The story of Jacob, Leah and Rachel is an inspiring chapter in the larger narrative of the Christian faith, but it also communicates a special message to women seeking emotional fulfillment: A man can never fully satisfy a woman's heart. He is not meant to fulfill her deepest needs. Only God sees a woman's need, and only He can meet it.

Waking Up With Jacob

Laban's awkward daughter grew up in the painful shadow of her younger sister, Rachel, a stunning beauty with a stormy personality. The Bible says, "Leah's eyes were weak and dull looking, but Rachel was beautiful and attractive" (Gen. 29:17, The Amplified Bible).

Jacob had fallen for Rachel at first sight. He never gave Leah a second look, but he was willing to work seven long years to seal a deal for Rachel.

When their wedding day finally came, Jacob was eager. The ceremony was grand, the applause of family and friends

delightful, and Rachel looked picture-perfect.

Imagine Jacob's alarm when he discovered it was her bridesmaid Leah, not Rachel herself, who lay beside him in bed the next morning! Laban had switched Leah for Rachel in the night, concerned that his homely daughter would never get a man otherwise.

Jacob erupted when he discovered the fraud. He was now obligated to two wives: Rachel, who was attractive, and Leah, who was not.

At the core of every woman lies a desire to be loved. She wants to be beautiful to her husband, wanted and needed as an equal. She needs to know that her heart is safe and that she will always be respected and desired above all.

What must Leah have felt that morning as she overheard Jacob complaining to Laban: "'What is this you have done to me? Was it not for Rachel that I served you?'" (Gen. 29:25, NKJV).

If Leah had ever hoped for love—if she had ever dared to think she could compete with her beautiful sister—her illusions were dashed that morning. When Leah woke up with Jacob, she was also waking up to a world of hurt: She was an unwanted bride, trapped in a loveless marriage.

Catching the Eye of God

Leah's first months as a newlywed were overshadowed by three emotional clouds: She felt unsightly, she felt unwanted, and she felt unloved. But in her pain, she encountered a ray of

hope that would fill her with new self-worth: Leah discovered that she was attractive to God.

The Bible says, "When the Lord saw that Leah was unloved, He opened her womb; but Rachel was barren" (Gen. 29:31). It is one of the most striking ironies in all of Scripture: Rachel the beloved was barren, while Leah the unloved caught the eye of God and became fruitful.

In a culture in which childbearing was the highest mark of divine approval, Leah was suddenly holding all the cards. Though Leah had been undesirable to Jacob, she was irresistible to God.

It's not the admired or the beautiful who capture God's heart. God prizes the Leahs. He favors the empty, not the self-satisfied. "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled," He tells us in His Word (Matt. 5:6).

God has always been attracted to unloved, overlooked people (see Deut. 7:7-8). He chooses those whom others overlook. Writing of the diversity in the body of Christ, Paul reminds us that "those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary.

"And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, on these we bestow greater honor. ... God composed the body, having given greater honor to that part which lacks it" (1 Cor. 12:22-24).

As if to illustrate this truth, Scripture reveals that it was Judah, the fourth son of Jacob and Leah, whose tribe

eventually produced a descendant named Jesus Christ. Rachel was able to give Jacob two sons, but “the desire of all nations”—Jesus—came from Leah, the least desired. Christ was the stone that the builders rejected, but He has become the most important stone of all (see Matt. 21:42).

If you have ever questioned your value or beauty as a woman, you need to understand something: In the eyes of God, you are more exquisite and rare than you can imagine. You may have seen yourself as flawed, but God’s take on you is something entirely different.

Never forget that “the Lord does not see as man sees; for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart” (1 Sam. 16:7).

In His eyes, you are well worth pursuing. He is chasing you, breaking through the walls you have built to protect your heart. His favor is overtaking you and healing your seasons of neglect, rejection and pain.

And whether you are in a loveless marriage or no marriage at all, your Creator is today your husband (see Is. 54:5). His promise in the midst of your pain is:

“‘Do not fear, for you will not be ashamed; neither be disgraced, for you will not be put to shame; for you will forget the shame of your youth, and will not remember the reproach of your widowhood anymore. ... For the Lord has called you like a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, like a youthful wife when you were refused” (vv. 4-6).

You don’t need to catch the eye of a man—you’ve caught the eye

of the King of Kings.

Accepting God's Love

Now it was Rachel's turn outside the tent. While she watched and wrestled with feeling second-best, Jacob and Leah began a family.

Leah began to heal, and with each new child, her heart grew stronger. The progression of her children's births reveals her journey as a woman learning to accept God's love. As time passed and each child was named, Leah took another step on the journey from pain to praise.

Leah named her first son Reuben—"the Lord sees"—for she said: "'The Lord has surely looked on my affliction. Now therefore, my husband will love me'" (Gen. 29:32). Leah knew she was not first in Jacob's heart, but she was hopeful that Reuben's birth would change things.

She gave birth to a second son, whom she named Simeon—"the Lord hears"—saying, "'Because the Lord has heard that I am unloved, He has therefore given me this son also'" (v. 33). She was still unfulfilled, but she had learned an important lesson: God's goodness could address her feelings of rejection. This was a major step toward wholeness.

She called her next son Levi—"connected"—saying, "'Now this time my husband will become attached to me, because I have borne him three sons'" (v. 34). She longed for intimacy and was hungry to connect emotionally. That need would soon be met in a surprising way.

Jacob's affection for Leah may not have changed much, but something was changing in her. She named her next son Judah, which means "praise," saying, "'Now I will praise the Lord'" (v. 35).

With this fourth son, Leah was able to shift her perspective. Instead of looking for Jacob's love, she learned to look to the One who always had loved her. At that moment, praise was born.

Leah's journey reveals that a woman must learn to let God love her. She begins by believing that the Lord sees her pain and hears her cry. This kind of faith is the foundation of her healing.

Her next step is to redirect her need to connect with a man by bringing it straight to God. A woman's heart is changed the moment she says, "Though I haven't connected with my Jacob, God is enough for me." When Christ truly becomes her everything—when He is all she needs—her heart is finally filled, and she begins to give birth to true praise.

Leah's entire way of thinking changed. She moved from the vulnerability and misery of "I am unloved and unwanted" to the joy of "I am beautiful to God."

Her focus shifted from what she lacked in life to what she possessed in God. Her shame and pain lifted instantly. Sorrow and abandonment became fading memories.

Leah had looked to a man for validation. It never came. If it had, she might never have recognized that God's approval was all she needed.

When a woman places a man at the center of her life, she cannot avoid misery and disappointment. But when she learns to give her heart completely to the Lord, she becomes fruitful and begins a life of complete satisfaction.

If you've become tired of waiting for your Jacob's love, embrace God's love and find your place of praise and healing. No one can care for you as He does. He satisfies the deepest need. He heals the wounded heart and teaches it to accept His love.

If you've been feeling like Leah waking up to Jacob, it's time to hear that you are attractive to God. When you learn to receive His love, you'll never feel unloved again.

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