

Families Are Messy
Where Is God in Our Relational Messes?

I. Introduction

- A. Genesis 30:25-26 (NLT) ²⁵Soon after Rachel had given birth to Joseph, Jacob said to Laban, *“Please release me so I can go home to my own country. ²⁶Let me take my wives and children, for I have earned them by serving you, and let me be on my way. You certainly know how hard I have worked for you.”*
- B. Three signs of a miserable job:
 - 1. Anonymity
 - 2. Irrelevance
 - 3. Immeasurement
- C. Genesis 30:27-30 (NLT) ²⁷*“Please listen to me,” Laban replied. “I have become wealthy, for the LORD has blessed me because of you. ²⁸Tell me how much I owe you. Whatever it is, I’ll pay it.” ²⁹Jacob replied, “You know how hard I’ve worked for you, and how your flocks and herds have grown under my care. ³⁰You had little indeed before I came, but your wealth has increased enormously. The LORD has blessed you through everything I’ve done. But now, what about me? When can I start providing for my own family?”*
- D. Genesis 31:6-7a (NLT) ⁶*“You know how hard I have worked for your father, ⁷but he has cheated me, changing my wages ten times.”*
- E. Genesis 31:14-15 (NLT) ¹⁴*Rachel and Leah responded, “That’s fine with us! We won’t inherit any of our father’s wealth anyway. ¹⁵He has reduced our rights to those of foreign women. And after he sold us, he wasted the money you paid him for us.”*
- F. Genesis 30:27 (NLT) *“Please listen to me,” Laban replied. “I have become wealthy, for the LORD has blessed me because of you.”*
- G. Genesis 30:30b (NLT) *“The LORD has blessed you through everything I’ve done.”*
- H. Genesis 31:3 (NLT) *Then the LORD said to Jacob, “Return to the land of your father and grandfather and to your relatives there, and I will be with you.”*

II. The Ways of God

- A. God never rushes.
 - 1. God’s normal pace is not fast!
- B. God always remembers.
 - 1. Genesis 31:13 (NLT) *“I am the God who appeared to you at Bethel, the place where you anointed the pillar of stone and made your vow to me. Now get ready and leave this country and return to the land of your birth.”*
- C. God regularly restores.

1. Genesis 31:38-42 (NLT) ³⁸“For twenty years I have been with you, caring for your flocks. In all that time your sheep and goats never miscarried. In all those years I never used a single ram of yours for food. ³⁹If any were attacked and killed by wild animals, I never showed you the carcass and asked you to reduce the count of your flock. No, I took the loss myself! You made me pay for every stolen animal, whether it was taken in broad daylight or in the dark of night. ⁴⁰I worked for you through the scorching heat of the day and through cold and sleepless nights. ⁴¹Yes, for twenty years I slaved in your house! I worked for fourteen years earning your two daughters, and then six more years for your flock. And you changed my wages ten times! ⁴²In fact, if the God of my father had not been on my side—the God of Abraham and the fearsome God of Isaac—you would have sent me away empty-handed. But God has seen your abuse and my hard work. That is why he appeared to you last night and rebuked you!”

III. How Does God Heal Damaged Relational Messes?

A. We have to verbalize the hurt.

1. Genesis 31:43 (NLT) *Then Laban replied to Jacob, “These women are my daughters, these children are my grandchildren, and these flocks are my flocks—in fact, everything you see is mine.”*

B. We resolve to stop hurting each other.

1. Genesis 31:44-46, 48 (NLT) ⁴⁴“So come, let’s make a covenant, you and I, and it will be a witness to our commitment.” ⁴⁵So Jacob took a stone and set it up as a monument. ⁴⁶Then he told his family members, “Gather some stones.” So they gathered stones and piled them in a heap. Then Jacob and Laban sat down beside the pile of stones to eat a covenant meal. ⁴⁸Then Laban declared, “This pile of stones will stand as a witness to remind us of the covenant we have made today.”

C. Try to see things from their perspective.

D. We begin to receive God’s heart for this other person.

IV. Conclusion