

“Gods of Love” - Genesis 29:15-35
Pastor Burt Garwood – February 11, 2018

Who is it that means everything to you? Is it possible that a relationship with a person has replaced your relationship with Jesus?

- READ: Genesis 29:16-18. Jacob loved Rachel and made a deal with her dad, Laban, that he'd work seven years if he could have Rachel as his wife.
- READ: Genesis 29:20. We have a hard time thinking objectively about people or even things that we love. That's why for some of you, this message will be a hard one to hear. Our emotions get involved and we don't see things clearly.
- You might need someone else to take a good hard look at your life to help you answer this question about who you love.
- READ: Genesis 29:21-25. But there is a twist in the story. Can you believe it? What kind of father does this? If you keep reading, eventually Jacob marries Rachel as well.

As we wrestle with the gods of love, here is the part that really matters: Leah wants more than anything for her husband to love her. That's what she puts her hope in.

- Leah is able to have children, while her sister Rachel has trouble conceiving. With every child she gives birth to, Leah thinks, “maybe now he will love me.” READ: Genesis 29:31-34.
- What Leah wanted more than anything else was love. It had become the god she worshiped.
- If we're honest with ourselves, it's the idea of love that we worship.
- As children, we read books that end with “*and they lived happily ever after.*” And we end up putting that dream on the altar and bowing down to it. In our culture, romantic love is held up as the ultimate human experience.
- Now don't misunderstand, these relationships are often beautiful gifts from God. God is the creator of romantic love. Marriage was his idea. And so was sex.
- The problem comes when love for someone else replaces him, when you love someone more than God.

If we're honest with ourselves, we're a lot like Leah, chasing after love...

- “If I can just do this for my spouse, keep the house looking good, do the dishes, take out the trash...then my spouse will love me.” Our lives become consumed with figuring out what we have to do or who we have become in order for our spouse to love us.
- Our love for our children can become a false god in our life. They become the only thing we live for, the highest priority, their schedules dominate our lives. Whether or not we have a good day is determined by our children. We allow our children the power to make us angry and disappointed, or joyful and happy.
- I talk to people who become empty nesters...and they hardly know each other because they were so focused on their kids. They have to reconnect and learn to love each other all over again. Other empty nesters just walk away...and end up in divorce.
- We see the idols of love in desperate daughters who marry the wrong man...they just want to be loved...sons do this too.

- When you love someone too much, you are willing to turn your whole world upside down to be the person that your boyfriend or girlfriend wants you to be. Love for this person consumes your thoughts.

Ultimately nothing is more destructive to our love life than to put romantic love on the throne instead of God.

- It puts incredible pressure on the relationship because we are saying to the person, “I want you to do for me what God alone can do for me.” Given enough time, the relationship will start to crack.
- Ultimately any false god disappoints you. It doesn't matter if it's money, or success at work, or sexual pleasure or love. They all lead to disappointment when you put them above your love for God.

God has ordered our lives in such a way that he is to be our most significant relationship.

- This is what Jesus was getting at in Matthew 10:37. When we get that right then our relationships with our spouse, our children, our parents, our friends – begin to line up.
- If you are experiencing frustration in some of your key relationships then it very well may be because of idolatry. Make Jesus your greatest affection and see what happens.

Every time Leah gave birth to a child she thought, maybe now he will love me. But it just never happened.

- READ: Genesis 29:35. Do you see the shift in Leah's heart? She finally stopped looking to her husband for those things that only God can give, and she turned to God and said, “This time I will praise the Lord.” She named her son Judah, which is the Hebrew word for Praise.
- Leah is rejected by her father and by her husband, but then she finally stops expecting them to meet her needs and she turns to God.
- Fascinating fact. READ: Matthew 1:2. Leah's fourth son Judah was an ancestor of Joseph, the earthly father of Jesus. God had a good plan for her marriage and it came when she turned to God as her source of fulfillment and put her hope in him.

Our love for others should flow first from our love for God.

- To love others properly, you must first experience the truest form of love that comes from God, who is the author of love in the first place.
- Going to the source, and drinking deeply of his love for you. Soaking in his unconditional love and forgiveness, and his doting on you. To feel what it means to be the apple of your Father-God's eye.
- And feeling your heart overflow with gratitude toward Jesus' great love that drove him to the cross to free you from sin and death's eternal grip.
- That's the love that centers us. That's the love that should flow from us.
- That's the love that should govern how we love others, where we rank them in our lives...right below our love for God. Anything other ranking is an idol.

[Borrowed heavily from Kyle Idleman's sermon series “Gods At War”, thanks for blessing us Kyle with this.]