

Jacob Meets Rachel

Genesis 29:1-22

Level D | Lesson 3 | Teacher Overview



When Jacob saw Rachel... and the sheep of Laban his mother's brother...he went near and rolled the stone from the well's mouth, and watered the flock. Then Jacob kissed Rachel, and lifted up his voice and wept....

So Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed a few days to him because of the love he had for her.

Genesis 29:10-11,20

For Teachers

This lesson has several activity options. You may wish to choose 2-3. Reading through all of the options will help you identify the activities that are best suited to your group's size, student mix, available supplies, and the time you have to prepare. You may also want to mix and match activities from other age levels.

Activity Options

1. Talk About It
2. Look Closer: Working for Rachel
3. Explore: How Are Religion and Marriage Connected?

Talk About It

Reading: Genesis 29:1-22

Jacob arrived in Haran after walking about 500 miles. He saw a well where shepherds were waiting to water their flocks. The shepherds confirmed that his uncle, Laban, lived close by and pointed out his daughter Rachel approaching with her flock. Jacob rolled the stone off the well and gave Rachel's sheep water. He went home with Rachel and met Laban. Jacob agreed to work for Laban for seven years in exchange for marrying Rachel.

1. Have you ever taken a journey that involved traveling for an entire month? What kinds of things might be difficult during a journey that lasted so long? (food, rest, clean clothing, sore feet if you were walking, etc.)
2. Jacob's 500 mile journey probably took him a month to complete. Why did Jacob go to Haran? Who was he looking for? (his uncle, Laban)
3. A well is a water source. The water and the stone covering the well picture different kinds of true ideas that are in the Word. What are the main properties of water? (fluid, cleanses, dilutes harmful chemicals, satisfies thirst, etc.) What are the main properties of stone? (solid, can be used to build, structurally strong, etc.)
4. The stone pictures solid foundational truths. What are these? (the 10 commandments, basic principles to live by) Water pictures spiritual ideas that help us purify false thinking and evil actions.
5. The stone covering the well is similar to the way deeper living spiritual ideas (the water) are hidden within the literal stories in the Word (under the stone). It takes effort to open up the deeper meaning of the stories—just as it took effort to lift the stone. What helps us open up the meaning of the Word? (our desire to live a spiritual life)
6. Jacob and Rachel were cousins. Relationships in the Word embody the relationship between true ideas and the affections that relate to them, e.g. we know we should treat others well and so we compliment others when we can. Can you think of some other examples?
7. Jacob went to live with Laban. He helped care for Laban's livestock. What did Jacob ask for in return for working? (Rachel, for his wife. It would have been customary for Leah, the elder daughter with poor eyesight, to marry first.)
8. Jacob agreed to work for seven years for Rachel. Why did this feel like a short time? (because he was inspired by his love for Rachel)
9. The Lord prepares a married partner for every person—either on earth or in heaven in the life after death. What work can we do in preparation for our future marriage? (e.g. learn about and practice good moral and spiritual behavior (10 commandments), learn to be a good friend, etc.) Does this work seem easy or hard? (sometimes it may seem easy, at other times it may seem hard; we can learn from our mistakes and try again)

Look Closer: Working for Rachel

At a Glance:

The New Church teaches what many instinctively believe when they fall in love: that true marriage love lasts forever. However there are forces at work that are actively eroding the ideals of marriage love, e.g. movies, TV and people's choices about how they act. This activity is designed to facilitate a discussion of constructive ways to combat these forces and also to help students develop qualities in themselves that will prepare them for a happy marriage in their future.



Supplies Needed for Each Student:

- *Working for Rachel in Our Lives* student page
- pen or pencil

Directions:

1. Today we will be talking about marriage. The Heavenly Doctrine reveals many new truths about marriage. Here are some examples: true married love lasts forever; the Lord creates a partner for each person; as we grow closer to the Lord in our spiritual lives we can experience increasing joy and delight in marriage; cultivating a marriage between true ideas and good loves and actions in our own lives is the best preparation for marriage with another person.
2. The story of Jacob meeting Rachel pictures a beautiful ideal of two people meeting and falling in love. But the story does not end there. Jacob has to work for seven years before he can marry Rachel.
3. Although marriage may seem far away, developing a vision for the marriage you want can help you identify and work on the kinds of qualities you would like your future married partner to have.
4. Part of knowing what you want involves recognizing forces that actively work against marriage love, even trying to destroy it. We may experience these forces in advertising, pictures, movies, jokes, attitudes, etc. Part of our “working for Rachel”—preparing for marriage—involves deciding what to do about these forces when we encounter them.
5. Distribute *Working for Rachel in Our Lives* student page and pens or pencils.
6. Read the top of the page aloud, then invite students to complete the table.
7. Choose some of the topics on the next page for a discussion.

Look Closer:

Working for Rachel continued

Discussion Topics:

1. Think of people who have stood up for what they believe and how that has changed the world, e.g. Mother Teresa, Nelson Mandela. Have you known someone who stood up for what they believed in?
2. What difference could you make if you stood up for what you believe?
3. In what ways is it possible to be friends with people who do not share your marriage values? In what ways is friendship not possible?
4. Everyone makes mistakes at times. Recognizing mistakes can sometimes be a turning point for something new and good. Is it ever too late to make a fresh start or choose new habits?
5. Are there other personal qualities you might want to add to the table on the student page?
6. How might a belief in eternal marriage affect the way you treat members of the opposite sex?
7. Does the idea that you can start working on your marriage now make sense?

Working for Rachel in Our Lives

A union with a partner of a similar and compatible nature may be provided on earth when people from their youth love, desire, and seek from the Lord a lawful and lovely partnership with one and who reject wandering lusts as an offense to the nostrils (see *Conjugal Love* 49).

When married partners love each other tenderly, they think of eternity in regard to the marriage covenant (*Conjugal Love* 216:4).

Jacob's meeting with Rachel in the field pictures a beautiful marriage relationship that many long for. We can prepare for this kind of relationship by working to develop the qualities of a good partner in ourselves and by turning away from negative messages which have the power to erode our desire to look toward and honor marriage.

The following is a list of steps you can take today to work for your future marriage. Read through the entire list and then put a check mark next to three steps you would like to set as goals for yourself. If some of these steps are already habits, try committing to something new.

Steps You Can Take

	Look for mentors.		Choose friends who support your ideals and goals.		Avoid situations that might be enabling someone to take advantage of you.
	Work on qualities in yourself that you will be looking for in a partner, e.g. the moral virtues of honesty, chastity, loyalty, compassion, etc.		Improve your mind through education so that you can become a more informed and useful partner.		Practice kindness and communication skills with family and friends who are in your life now.
	Turn off inappropriate movies or TV.		Read the Word.		Be honest with yourself and others.
	Avoid influences and actions that might degrade the ideals of marriage.		Break off potentially harmful friendships.		Trust the Lord and follow His leading.
	Listen to your conscience—it's the Lord talking.		Avoid listening to or repeating dirty jokes.		Show respect for the opposite sex.
	Work on friendships with both sexes in preparation for a friendship with your married partner.		Learn practical skills that will help make your future home run more smoothly.		Get to know who you are and what you value.
	Avoid situations in which you may feel tempted to do things you may later regret.		Look away from pictures that degrade marriage.		Dress modestly to protect both yourself and others who look at you.

Explore: How Are Religion and Marriage Connected?

At a Glance:

This activity introduces the New Church idea that there is a connection between religion and happiness in marriage. When Jacob left home, his parents told him to go to relatives to find a wife. Families in the Word embody ideas and loving actions that are similar or related. When married partners believe in and act from shared religious principles, they are able to receive conjugal love, God's greatest gift. The book *Conjugal Love* outlines various marital situations that make it difficult or impossible for couples to experience this love. Differences in religion are at the top of this list.



Students will read and discuss the student page. The teacher will choose a discussion statement to aloud. Students will discuss the statement with a partner. Each pair will express their agreement or disagreement with the statement by positioning one person on a value continuum line. Students will then discuss their choice with the larger group. Continue the activity with the next statement.

Supplies Needed:

- *How Are Religion and Marriage Connected?* page for each student
- “Value Continuum” line (see *Teacher Preparation* below)

Teacher Preparation

- Set up a “Value Continuum” on the floor using tape, yarn or paper strips. Your finished line should look be long enough for a group of students to stand on. Text slips are included to label points on the line if you wish.

Agree _____ Neutral _____ Disagree

Directions:

1. Distribute *How are Religion and Marriage Connected?* student page. Read aloud as a group and discuss.
2. Divide students into pairs.
3. Tell the students: I will read a series of statements. You will discuss each statement with your partner, and decide whether you agree or disagree with the statement. Partners may need to compromise, but will have an opportunity to clarify their choice.
4. One person from each pair will place themselves on the “Value Continuum” to show how strongly they agree or disagree with the statement.

Explore: How Are Religion and Marriage...continued

5. Each person will be given the opportunity to explain their choice.
6. Students will be given the opportunity to respond and discuss various opinions.
7. Continue to choose statements that you think will work well for your group.
8. Wrap up the session with following thoughts:

The Lord loves and brings blessing to all people. We receive His blessing more and more when we learn about the Lord and walk in His path. Jesus said, "In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so I would have told you." (John 14:2). No matter what path we take, the Lord will bless our marriage to the extent that we let Him do this.

Statements for Discussion:

1. Marriage love doesn't really have to do with what people believe—it has to do with how people treat each other.
2. Religion doesn't make any difference in a marriage—couples who go to church together get divorced at the same rate as people who never attend church.
3. If a Hindu and a Christian marry they can experience the gift of conjugal love if each practices their religion and treats their partner well.
4. Conjugal love is only for religious people. There are other kinds of happiness that are just as good for people who don't believe in God.
5. If I marry someone who believes what I do marriage would be boring. I could have a lot more fun in a marriage with someone I can debate and argue with.
6. If I marry someone from a different religion our marriage will be stronger because we will each think for ourselves.
7. Conjugal love is really a marriage between knowing and loving true ideas as an individual. So regardless of whether my partner is religious or not—if I practice what my religion teachers, I will experience conjugal love.
8. Conjugal love is so rare that I don't think it's possible for me to experience it, given how many marriages don't last today.
9. I can increase my chances of being blessed with conjugal love if I marry someone who believes what I do.
10. The Lord is most interested in the love in our hearts. If we love what is good, the Lord will bless us with conjugal love, regardless of what we each believe.

How Are Religion and Marriage Connected?

When Jacob left home his parents, knew that he would soon choose a wife. They advised Jacob not to marry one of the “daughters of Canaan,” but to go to his uncle in Haran, and take “a wife from there of the daughters of Laban your mother’s brother” (Genesis 28:1,2). There is an interesting spiritual reason for this.

Each person in the Word stands for a spiritual quality in us. People in same family—brothers and sisters, parents and children, husbands and wives—embody relationships between similar true ideas and good loves, or false ideas and evil loves. People from different nations represent unrelated spiritual ideas or loves. Here are a few examples:

Ideas in the same “spiritual family”	Ideas from different “nations”
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• There is one God.• God loves me.• God cares for me.• I can know and love God.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Lord God Jesus Christ is the one God of heaven and earth.• God exists in three persons.• There is no God.

A husband and wife in the Word picture a partnership between a true idea and a good love in our minds (e.g. Jacob and Rachel) or the partnership between a false idea and an evil love (e.g. Ahab and Jezebel).

How Are People Connected Spiritually through Marriage?

Many people believe that marriage is simply a couple’s agreement to love and care for each other. The New Church teaches that genuine marriage love (*conjugal love*) is more than this. It is a marriage love that springs from our connection with God. It depends on each partner having a concept of God as loving and wise and involves each partner leading a life of useful service. Together a couple grows in God’s love, in time becoming wiser and more spiritual. It is more than a partnership between two people: it also involves a couple’s living connection with God.

Is Genuine Marriage Love Possible without Religion?

Many things can make people happy, e.g. having a successful career, being liked, making money or making a difference. Happiness that comes from this kind of success is not necessarily spiritual happiness. If God is not in the picture our happiness comes not from Him, but from the selfish satisfaction of achieving our own goals. If this kind of love motivates a marriage, the marriage does not have spiritual warmth at its center but the coldness of self-love (see *Conjugal Love* 239).

The book *Conjugal Love* explains conditions which cause cold feelings to develop between married couples (*Conjugal Love* 234-270). Significant religious differences are at the top of this list, e.g. one partner is religious and the other is not, one partner is one religion and the other is a different religion. Religion is at the heart of everything we do, e.g. making a snack for another person. A loving person may serve a snack out of consideration for their friend’s wellbeing; a person who is selfish may serve a snack hoping their friend will do a bigger favor in return; another person may do it to merit heaven. If partners have different fundamental goals it will impact each action they take.

Jacob’s parents wanted him to marry a relative—someone with similar spiritual ideals. Our Heavenly Father offers us His greatest blessing, conjugal love, if we make a similar choice. “All the states of blessedness, happiness, delight, pleasantness, and pleasure which, by the Lord the Creator, could ever be conferred on man, are gathered into this his love” (*Conjugal Love* 68).

AGREE

NEUTRAL

DISAGREE