

Fathers & Daughters

in the Biblical Tradition



Session One: A Stealthy Wedding Planner Genesis 29: 13-30

1. **Talkback with Pastor Nina** - How does this narrative in Genesis 29 candidly demonstrate that often - even in family life - human beings value others for what they can do for us, rather than for who they are? Might you share any personal episodes from family life where God took a relationship of brokenness or struggle, and turned it into something good?
2. **Father's Day** - Do you agree with the commentator Gordon Wenham when he says, "However mean Laban was to Jacob, he still treated his daughters generously"? What are the commendable features of Laban's fatherhood in this scene? What concerns you about Laban's behavior? Do you have a father-daughter "wedding story" you would like to share?
3. **Go Deeper** - Identify the several references to "serve" or "service" in this story. What are the best models of servanthood, and what are the worst? What are the most positive theological or ethical messages distilled from this rather curious episode, overall?

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Session Two: Worthy of an Inheritance Numbers 27: 1-11

- 1. Talkback with Pastor Tim** - Societal changes, even changes grounded in religious practice, are often appropriate... yet hard-fought and time-consuming. Can you imagine any pushback from “...the priest, the leaders, and all the congregation” (v. 2) in this legal challenge from the daughters of Zelophehad? In today’s context, describe the influence of secular cultural shifts on the Church’s consideration of change. Discuss the role of scripture, tradition, and experience in discerning which changes are good and which are not.
- 2. Father’s Day** - Review Joshua 15:13-19 (also Judges 1:12-15) for another biblical tale of a daughter requesting from her father - and receiving - a parcel of land. Identify women from history or personal experience who are worthy drivers of the business/economic community.
- 3. Go Deeper** - Read Numbers 36:5-12 to learn how Moses amended the original ruling granting an inheritance to the daughters of Zelophehad. Notice the importance of “family lands” in Jewish antiquity; does that tradition have any parallel in your own family life? How do you feel about Moses’ command that the five daughters must now get married? How do you feel about women marrying their cousins, generally?

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Session Three: Early Voices in the Church Acts 21: 7-14

1. **Talkback with Pastor Eric** - Does this very brief mention of Philip's four daughters (un-named) advance the cause of women, or diminish it...or merely reflect the culture of the first-century world? Have women reached a level of equality in our church today? Where might we still need to work for advances?
2. **Father's Day** - Review the limited knowledge we have of Philip in Acts 6:1-7 and Acts 8:26-40. Based on his own personal experience of the Christian faith, what teachings or principles might Philip have passed along to his daughters in raising them?
3. **Go Deeper** - Are there footnotes in your Bible which may shed any light on these four unmarried daughters of Philip? Recalling the promise of Joel 2:28a, identify other female voices which furthered the gospel movement in the first century world.

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Session Four: Remembered by Name
Job 42: 10-17

- 1. Talkback with Pastor Dave** - How do the names of Job's daughters (42:14) aid in describing the joy of his restored & blessed life? Share some of the stories behind the names of particular women in your family.
- 2. Father's Day** - If you have access to the Apocrypha, review the Wisdom of Sirach (Ecclesiasticus) 26:10-12 and 42:9-11 to learn of one man's struggles with a difficult daughter. Do you have any "happy ending" tales to share about difficult daughters? Beyond beauty and wealth (42:15), what qualities might parents hope to develop in their daughters in order to promote success in life?
- 3. Go Deeper** - To what degree does God reward faithfulness in this lifetime by granting the blessings Job received: friendship, prosperity, and family? What role does our hope of eternal life play for today's "Jobs" who are in the midst of real struggle?

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Session Five: Raised to be Bold Esther 4

- 1. Talkback with Pastor Stacy** - Do you recognize Esther's "people-pleasing" tendency early in the larger narrative? What do you think causes her initial "No!" in chapter four to become a Yes? What relationships in your own life have helped you move from being a people-pleaser to being a bold advocate for God's will?
- 2. Father's Day** - Describe the range of emotions which Mordecai may have experienced as the drama of Esther 4 unfolds. Do you think his motivation as (1) a father and (2) a man of God were in *conflict* or in *concert* here? Can you recall any similar father-daughter episodes from your own life?
- 3. Go Deeper** - Discuss the "Who knows" idiom in 4:14, a Hebrew phrase which seem to open up possibility (cf. II Samuel 12:22, Jonah 3:9). Do you hear it as an expression of confidence, or surrender, or ... what? When has a "Who knows" measure of faith helped you overcome a particularly strenuous challenge?

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Session Six: A Grave Sacrifice Judges 11:29-40

- 1. Talkback with Pastor Portia** - Do you see the recklessness in Jephthah's vow (Judges 11:30-31) paralleled in the "whatever" attitude in folks today? What sins of the modern culture are foreshadowed by this tale?
- 2. Father's Day** - What merits Jephthah's listing in the New Testament "Hall of Fame" (Hebrews 11:32)? What are his best qualities as a father, or as a man of God? What are his worst?
- 3. Go Deeper** - Compare the weeping of the daughters of Israel (Judges 11:40) with the weeping of the daughters of Jerusalem (Luke 23:26-31). What is the purpose of their lament? Is there victory which emerges from out of their tension and terror?

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Session Seven: It Ain't Over Luke 8:40-42, 49-56

1. **Talkback with Pastor Jenny** - What does it mean in this scene to say: Jesus not only wants to give these two daughters physical health, he really wants to give them himself? What spiritual practices or experiences in Church life help you to know that in the eyes of Jesus, you are precious (“... *like a daughter to him*” - cf. II Samuel 12:3b)?
2. **Father's Day** - In the Gospel of Luke, parents consistently display affection and concern for their children (cf. 2:48, 7:12, 9:38, 11:11-12, 14:5, 18:15-16). How has your role as a parent (or, your role as a son/daughter) impacted the development of your faith? And the \$64,000.00 question: are daughters more like their fathers, or their mothers (cf. Ezekiel 16:44)?
3. **Go Deeper** - The closing line in this narrative is somewhat bewildering to the contemporary reader: “*Tell no one...!*” (8:56b, cf. Mark 5:43a but also Matthew 9:26). In context, why might Jesus have given this command? In today's world, how might our testimonies about divine healings - or our witness to the reality of Jesus' resurrection, itself! - be central to the spreading of the gospel?