



The Nourishing Vocation Project Near and Now:

Listening to your Longings - Rachel

Warm-up Question

When have you wanted something really badly, but it seemed beyond your grasp?

Give examples



"Woman crying" by [Billy and Lynn](#) is licensed under [CC BY-NC-ND 2.0](#)

Reflection Questions

1. What do you see in this image?
2. What do you feel looking at this image?
3. What stories from your own life does this image bring to mind?
4. What stories of the world does this image bring to mind?

Then God Remembered Rachel

Read [Genesis 30:1-24](#)

Bible Story Reflection

Rachel's heart is aching. She longs to have children. She longs to be a mother. Her infertility has created a chasm within her that cannot be filled. While the story articulates Rachel's personal struggle, it also serves as an opportunity to point beyond Rachel's longing to God who acts. Rachel's story, therefore, is a way to tell not only about God's working in her own life and the lives of the descendants of Abraham and Sarah, but to also point to God's ongoing work in the world. Hence, the movement of the story is from barrenness, to conception, to birth – and longing fulfilled.

In engaging with this story in our own lives, care must be taken on a couple of important fronts. Care must be taken not to reduce Rachel to a character that plays a role in a divine drama, and care must be taken not to simplistically assert that God will miraculously fulfill all of the longings of the human heart.

With this in mind, the invitation of this story is several-fold. We are invited to find ourselves in Rachel's experience, to name the sorrows of our hearts, to cry out from those sorrows, and to expect that God will both hear and care. Second, this story calls us to empathize with those whose sorrows are not our own: it demands that we not turn away from the pain that our siblings experience, but to recognize that their unique pain is real and worthy of our accompaniment and work toward consolation. Third, in this story we hear of a God who remembers and who acts. As we consider this in and for our own lives and for the life of the world, we have an opportunity to reflect upon the immense significance of a God who remembers us in our suffering, not with indifference or unconcern, but with care and compassion and amid all things is working and moving toward life – full and abundant – not just in some distant future, but amid this present-life sojourn.



Discussion Questions

1. In what ways do you identify with Rachel?
2. Talk about a time your heart was so heavy with grief that you felt like you would die if the grief was not lifted.
3. How hard is it to cry out to other people – and to God – amid your longings?
4. How do you think Rachel would tell her own story?
5. What does it mean to you to be remembered by God amid your own suffering?
6. When have you felt like you have indeed been remembered by God?
7. How is the God who remembers made visible today?
8. How are you called to be the presence of the God who remembers for others who are filled with unquenchable longing or suffering? Be specific.

Activity Suggestions

Create a visual diagram that illustrates both times of longing and God's remembrance in your life.

Think of someone in your life who would benefit from being reminded that God remembers them with love, mercy and care. Write them a letter.

Stand in a circle with each person taking a turn in the middle. Lay hands on the person in the middle to let them know that God remembers them. Each person in turn speaks a word of remembrance to the person in the middle.

Prayer Concerns

Those struggling with infertility, death of a loved one, unfulfilled dreams of any kind

Closing Prayer

Hear my voice when I call out to you, O God, and remember me in my longings. In the name of +Jesus, Amen.

