Make notes on the following:

Her character

Her sorrow/heartache

Her joy/redemption

Write a summary of her story

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Prayer Focus

So many of us have grown up in a dysfunctional family. Thankfully, that doesn’t give us the verdict on our lives. We don’t have to carry on that legacy of dysfunction. We can make a change. What are some dysfunctional behaviors or attitudes that you are holding on to? Take the time to let God search your heart and show you the unhealthy behaviors and attitudes that you need to hand over to Him. Then healthy some healthy strategies and habits so that you don’t fall into that trap of dysfunction again. We are overcomers - God’s word says so. And with the help of the Holy Spirit, we can stop any and all unhealthy habits we have picked up from our family and friends - although it might also mean eliminating some of those relationships.

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Recently, I was thinking about my extended family and I wondered how a group of people could become so dysfunctional. So messed up! Things like witchcraft, rebellion, lies, jealousy (oh, that jealousy!), adultery, emasculated men, passive fathers, dominating wives, controlling mothers, sexual abuse, mental illness, emotional abuse...the list goes on. These kinds of things should not happen in any family let alone a family that is labeled “Christian” - right?

Wrong.

You see, sin is no respecter of persons. Anyone of us can start indulging in sinful behaviors only to let it ruin our lives and the lives of others as we continue to bow down to our desires.

Maybe you’ve been caught in the middle of a legacy of mess and sin. You didn’t have a choice but to endure. I know. I’ve been there. And I am so thankful for the word of God. I am thankful that He included stories in His Holy book that we can relate to. Because we live in a sin-rampant world.

But...there is redemption. Let’s look at a woman who was caught up in a life of other people’s sin.

Bilhah.

You can find her story intertwined with Rachel’s in Genesis 29:29-30:7 and 35:22, 25.

We all know the story of Leah and Rachel and how Laban tricked Jacob into marrying Leah when he was promised Rachel. Eventually, Jacob also married Rachel - and the jealousy between the 2 sisters only escalated. Leah was having babies and Rachel was barren. So, in order for her to have children, she used her maidservant, Bilhah, as a surrogate. Are you ready to hear about how this surrogate situation worked? Well, Rachel had Bilhah ‘recline’ on her lap as Jacob had sex with her. It kind of created the thinking that the baby was not Bilhah’s, but Rachel’s. Yikes, hey?

Anyway, Bilhah conceived and gave birth to a boy, Dan. Bilhah continued to be a surrogate for Rachel and gave birth to Naphtali. The tension in that home just kept getting worse - and Bilhah keeps getting caught right in the middle. Let’s take a closer look.

1. Read the story of Jacob, Rachel, and Leah as a refresher. Make brief notes below.

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2. Who was Bilhah? How did she come into the life of Rachel? (see Genesis 29:29).

Bilhah was a slave girl. She had no rights or freedoms. She was forced into this highly dysfunctional family. Maybe you can relate to Bilhah. Maybe you were born or forced into
circumstances beyond your control. Write about this below:
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3. Read Genesis 30:1-7. There was a lot of tension in this household - can you even imagine? One man (Jacob), 2 wives who are sisters and hate each other, maidservants who get caught in the middle...and children. Reading verse 1, what motivates Rachel in her rash decision to give Bilhah to Jacob?
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4. Bilhah went from being a maidservant to a being used as a way to get revenge on Leah. For Rachel to get what she wants...a child. Did Bilhah have a say in this weird and destructive arrangement?
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Bilhah is forced to have sex with her boss’s husband while her boss watches. How messed up is that? A lot of questions are going through my mind. Questions that make this whole scenario even worse. I’m not sure how Jacob could have been aroused enough to perform. How either of them could’ve been “OK” with this situation. I suppose it shows us how far people are willing to go when they are overcome with jealousy (Rachel) and seething with anger (Jacob).

5. How many children did Bilhah give birth to as a surrogate? What were the names of the children?
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6. If we look at the 12 tribes of Israel, we will see the names of these sons as well as the other sons born of Jacob through Leah, Rachel, and Zilpha (Leah’s maidservant). Let’s make a 4-columned chart listing the names of the sons for each woman. See Genesis 35:23-26 for help.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leah</th>
<th>Rachel</th>
<th>Bilhah</th>
<th>Zilpah</th>
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7. Flip over a few chapters to Genesis 35:22. Read what happens in this verse.

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Sadly, Bilhah’s shame and pain from this dysfunctional family end after Rachel forced her to have sex with Jacob. Leah’s son, Rueben raped her. After Rachel died, it seems that Jacob continued to have relations with Bilhah. Please note: Israel here is in reference to Jacob. Israel is Jacob’s other name.

8. While Bilhah had a life that was full of pain and living in a house that was full of jealousy, rage, and sin, her 2 sons did become two of the tribes of Israel. What may have helped Bilhah cope with her tragic state? What would you tell her if she was a friend? How can you relay those words of encouragement to yourself?

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9. This family was so dysfunctional and yet God used them. This is grace, my friend. While we can’t always escape dysfunction, we can rely on His grace and expect that He will turn all of our pain and shame into something good for His glory. What are you waiting on Him for? What circumstance in your life are you wanting Him to turn around to be used for His purposes?

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Additional Notes and Thoughts:
Bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.

*Colossians 3:13*

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.

*John 10:10*

For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.

*Jeremiah 29:11*

“And I will be a father to you, And you shall be sons and daughters to Me,” Says the Lord Almighty.

*2 Corinthians 6:18*

Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God.*

*Galatians 4:7*

* and daughter

For I will pour out water on the thirsty land And streams on the dry ground; I will pour out My Spirit on your offspring And My blessing on your descendants.

*Isaiah 44:3*