

RENAMED

*Benjamin: Sorrow to Strength | Teacher: Libin Abraham
Sermon Questions for 6.14.2026*

OPENER

In the world we live in, life is rarely all joy or all sorrow. Often, we are asked to hold both at the same time. We hold hope and heartbreak, burden and blessing, grief and peace. One day we celebrate a new baby, and the next we stand beside a casket. Sometimes our deepest grief arrives right on the heels of our greatest celebration.

Grief is a universal language. We know it through lost dreams, infertility, a broken marriage, prolonged singleness, estranged children, a hard diagnosis, betrayal, or aging parents. Often in the middle of our grief, we often wonder if God is still with us.

This week we come to the next renaming story in our series. We have watched Abraham and Sarah wait, and we have watched Jacob strive. Now we meet Jacob and Rachel at the birth of their son Benjamin, a child renamed in the middle of grief. Their story invites us to ask what we do when sorrow and blessing arrive together, and who we believe God to be when life turns hard.

READ

Genesis 35:9-20; Genesis 49:27; Philippians 3:5; Isaiah 53:3; Ephesians 1:20-23

MAIN POINTS

1. God's presence does not exempt us from sorrow

Right after God blessed Jacob at Bethel and reaffirmed his new name, Israel, tragedy struck. Jacob had just heard that kings and a nation would come from him, and then his beloved Rachel died giving birth to their son. We sometimes assume that crisis means God has abandoned us, but this story teaches us that God can be fully present and life can still be hard. Tragedy comes to the righteous and the unrighteous alike. Walking in step with God does not place us above the sorrows of a fallen world.

2. We often name our future by our present pain

With her dying breath, Rachel named her son Ben-Oni, which means son of sorrow. She understandably named the child through the lens of her present pain. We do the same thing. A season of loneliness becomes alone is who I will be forever. A failure becomes I am a failure. A betrayal becomes I will never trust again. The pain is real, but the names we give ourselves in the middle of it are not always true.

3. We can validate pain without surrendering hope

Jacob did not deny Rachel's death. He grieved, he mourned, and he built a marker at her grave. Yet he renamed the boy Benjamin, son of my right hand, a name of strength, favor, and blessing. He was not minimizing her sorrow. He was saying that sorrow is real, but sorrow is not the whole story. Biblical care for one another does the same. We acknowledge the reality of Ben-Oni while pointing people toward Benjamin. Sorrow may shape our story, but it does not have to define our identity.

4. God is still writing the story

If all we knew of Benjamin was his birth, we would assume he was forever a son of tragedy. But God was not finished. Benjamin became a son of strength, his tribe became known for its elite warriors, Israel's first king Saul came from it, and centuries later so did Saul of Tarsus, the Apostle Paul, who wrote nearly half the New Testament. Rachel saw a

funeral, but God saw the future. Sorrow and strength are not opposites here, because God strengthens us through our sorrow and turns what looks like an ending into a beginning.

5. Jesus is the Son of Sorrow at the right hand

There is a gospel hint hidden in the geography. Rachel was buried on the way to Bethlehem, a place of grief and tears for Jacob. Centuries later that same town became the birthplace of Jesus. Jesus, who had always been at the right hand of the Father, became the man of sorrows acquainted with our grief. He entered our suffering and death so that sorrow would not have the final word, and then he rose and was seated again at the right hand of God. The Christian story is not no sorrow. It is sorrow transformed.

ENGAGE WITH GOD IN A GROUP

- When have you experienced joy and sorrow at the same time, holding both hope and heartbreak together? What was that like?
- Libin said we sometimes wonder if hard seasons mean God has abandoned us. How does the truth that God can be present while life is still hard change the way you read your own story?
- Rachel named her son through the lens of her present pain. What are some of the names we are tempted to give ourselves in seasons of grief or failure? What crisis in your life determined your perspective on life?
- What does it look like to validate someone's pain without surrendering hope? Where do we tend to lean too far toward only Ben-Oni or only Benjamin?
- Benjamin's legacy reached all the way to the Apostle Paul. How does knowing that God is still writing the story give you hope for a situation that feels finished?
- Libin described a sacred assignment to help people remember who they are when grief makes them forget. Who in your life is in pain right now, and how could you point them toward hope this week?
- Bethlehem went from being a place of burial to the birthplace of Jesus. Where might God be preparing to bring new life out of a place of loss in your own life?

BOTTOM LINE

Sorrow may shape your story, but it does not get to write the final word. God meets us in our grief, and through a living Savior he turns our sorrow into strength.