



The significance of Making A Vow

Eccles. 5:4

**So when you make a
promise to God, don't
delay in following
through, for God takes
no pleasure in fools.
Keep all the promises
you make to him.**

Compiled by Dr. Harold Bollinger

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Forward

By Mary Brown

It may not be on the mountain height.

Or over the stormy sea.

It may not be in the battle front

My Lord will have need of me.

But if by a still small voice he calls

To paths I do not know,

I'll answer dear Lord, with my hand in thine,

I'll go where you want me to go.

Refrain:

I'll go where you want me to go dear Lord

Over mountain, or plain, or sea.

I'll say what you want me to say dear Lord,

I do what you want me to do.

Making a promise to God is a very serious act. Throughout this study, you may see those who made vows or promises to God, and the resulting outcomes.

Chapter 1

Do not delay to pay your vow.

Deuteronomy 23:21-23

"When you make a vow to the LORD your God, you shall not delay to pay it, for it would be sin in you, and the LORD your God will surely require it of you. "However, if you refrain from vowing, it would not be sin in you. "You shall be careful to perform what goes out from your lips, just as you have voluntarily vowed to the LORD your God, what you have promised.

This commandment guarded against selfishly holding on to one's possessions. It also insured that no one had to go hungry. It was not, however, an excuse for taking advantage of one's neighbor. The Pharisees did not interpret this appropriately when they accused Jesus and the disciples of harvesting on the Sabbath (Matthew 12:1-2).

A man shall not violate his word.

Numbers 30:2

"If a man makes a vow to the LORD, or takes an oath to bind himself with a binding obligation, he shall not violate his word; he shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth.

Moses reminded the people that their promises to God and others must be kept. In ancient times, people did not sign written contracts.

A person's word was as binding as a signature. To make a vow even more binding, an offering was given along with it. No one was forced by law to make a vow; but once made, vows had to be fulfilled. Breaking a vow meant a broken trust and a broken relationship. Trust is still the basis of our relationships with God and others. A broken promise today is just as harmful as it was in Moses' day.

Make a vow of inquiry.

Proverbs 20:25

It is a trap for a man to say rashly, "It is holy!" And after the vows to make inquiry.

To dedicate something meant that you intended to give it as an offering to God. *Dedicated* means set apart for religious use. This proverb points out the evil of making a vow rashly and then reconsidering it. God takes vows seriously and requires that they be carried out (Deut. 23:21-23).

We often have good intentions when making a vow because we want to show God that we are determined to please him. Jesus, however, says it is better not to make promises to God because he knows how difficult they are to keep (Matthew 5:33-37). If you still feel it is important to make a vow, make sure that you weigh the consequences of breaking that vow. (In Judges 11, Jephthah made a rash promise to sacrifice the first thing he saw on his return home.

As it happened, he saw his daughter first.) It is better not to make promises than to make them and then later want to change them. It is better still to count the cost beforehand and then to fulfill them.

Sacrifice only the best to the Lord.

Malachi 1:14

"But cursed be the swindler who has a male in his flock and vows it, but sacrifices a blemished animal to the Lord, for I am a great King," says the LORD of hosts, "and my name is feared among the nations."

Worship was a “burden” to these priests. Too many think that following God is supposed to make life easy and more comfortable. They are looking for a God of convenience. The truth is that it often takes hard work to live by God’s high standards. He may call us to face poverty or suffering. But if serving God is more important to us than anything else, what we must give up is of little importance compared to what we gain—eternal life with God.

Pay what you vow.

Ecclesiastes 5:4-8

When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed.

Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay. Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin; neither say thou before the angel, that it was an error: wherefore should God be angry at thy voice, and destroy the work of thine hands?

For in the multitude of dreams and many words there are also divers vanities: but fear thou God.

If thou seest the oppression of the poor, and violent perverting of judgment and justice in a province, marvel not at the matter: for he that is higher than the highest regardeth; and there be higher than they.

A father may stop a vow.

Numbers 30:3-8

If a woman also vow a vow unto the Lord, and bind herself by a bond, being in her father's house in her youth; And her father hear her vow, and her bond wherewith she hath bound her soul, and her father shall hold his peace at her: then all her vows shall stand, and every bond wherewith she hath bound her soul shall stand.

But if her father disallow her in the day that he heareth; not any of her vows, or of her bonds wherewith she hath bound her soul, shall stand: and the Lord shall forgive her, because her father disallowed her.

And if she had at all a husband, when she vowed, or uttered ought out of her lips, wherewith she bound her soul; and her husband heard it, and held his peace at her in the day that he heard it: then her vows shall stand, and her bonds wherewith she bound her soul shall stand.

But if her husband disallowed her on the day that he heard it; then he shall make her vow which she vowed, and that which she uttered with her lips, wherewith she bound her soul, of none effect: and the Lord shall forgive her.

Under Israelite law, parents could overrule their children's vows. This helped young people avoid the consequences of making foolish promises or costly commitments. From this law comes an important principle for both parents and children. Young people still living at home should seek their parents' help when they make decisions. A parent's experience could save a child from a serious mistake. Parents, however, should

exercise their authority with caution and grace. They should let children learn from their mistakes while protecting them from disaster.

A husband may annul the wife's vow.

Numbers 30:10-15

And if she vowed in her husband's house, or bound her soul by a bond with an oath; and her husband heard it, and held his peace at her, and disallowed her not: then all her vows shall stand, and every bond wherewith she bound her soul shall stand.

But if her husband hath utterly made them void on the day he heard them; then whatsoever proceeded out of her lips concerning her vows, or concerning the bond of her soul, shall not stand: her husband hath made them void; and the Lord shall forgive her.

Every vow, and every binding oath to afflict the soul, her husband may establish it, or her husband may make it void. [14] But if her husband altogether hold his peace at her from day to day; then he establisheth all her vows, or all her bonds, which are upon her: he confirmeth them, because he held his peace at her in the day that he heard them.

But if he shall any ways make them void after that he hath heard them; then he shall bear her iniquity.

Chapter 2

An offering must be without defect.

Leviticus 22:17-19

Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to Aaron and to his sons and to all the sons of Israel and say to them, 'Any man of the house of Israel or of the aliens in Israel who presents his offering, whether it is any of their votive or any of their freewill offerings, which they present to the LORD for a burnt offering-- for you to be accepted--it must be a male without defect from the cattle, the sheep, or the goats.

Animals with defects were not acceptable as sacrifices because they did not represent God's holy nature. Furthermore, the animal had to be without blemish in order to foreshadow the perfect, sinless life of Jesus Christ. When we give our best time, talent, and treasure to God rather than what is tarnished or common, we show the true meaning of worship and testify to God's supreme worth.

A freewill offering must be eaten on the day of offering.

Leviticus 7:16

'But if the sacrifice of his offering is a votive or a freewill offering, it shall be eaten on the day that he offers his sacrifice, and on the next day what is left of it may be eaten;

The fellowship offering was divided into three kinds according to purpose: thanksgiving offering, vow offering, and freewill offering.

A thanksgiving offering was appropriate whenever one wished to show thanks to God, as when recovering from a serious illness, or surviving a dangerous calamity (Psalm 107). A vow offering was given in fulfillment of a vow (2 Samuel 15:7-8). The freewill offering, however, needed no special occasion or reason.

A sacrifice of peace unto the Lord

Leviticus 22:21

'When a man offers a sacrifice of peace offerings to the LORD to fulfill a special vow or for a freewill offering, of the herd or of the flock, it must be perfect to be accepted; there shall be no defect in it.

Animals with defects were not acceptable as sacrifices because they did not represent God's holy nature. Furthermore, the animal had to be without blemish in order to foreshadow the perfect, sinless life of Jesus Christ. When we give our best time, talent, and treasure to God rather than what is tarnished or common, we show the true meaning of worship and testify to God's supreme worth.

An offering of fire unto the Lord

Numbers 15:2-4

"Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, 'When you enter the land where you are to live, which I am giving you, then make an offering by fire to the LORD, a burnt offering or a sacrifice to fulfill a special vow, or as a freewill offering or in your appointed times, to make a soothing aroma to the LORD, from the herd or from the flock.'

The one who presents his offering shall present to the LORD a grain offering of one-tenth of an ephah of fine flour mixed with one-fourth of a hin of oil,

“An aroma pleasing to the LORD” means that God would be pleased with their sacrifices...

Chapter 3

Pay your vows to the Most High

Psalm 50:14

"Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving and pay your vows to the Most High;

Some people glibly recite God's laws but are filled with deceit and evil. They claim his promises but refuse to obey him. This is sin, and God will judge people for it. We too are hypocrites when we are not what we claim to be. To let this inconsistency remain shows that we are not true followers of God.

I will pay my vows.

Psalm 66:13

I shall come into your house with burnt offerings; I shall pay you my VOWS,

People sometimes make bargains with God, saying, "If you heal me (or get me out of this mess), I'll obey you for the rest of my life." However, soon after they recover, the vow is forgotten and the old life-style is resumed.

This writer made a promise to God, but he remembered the promise and was prepared to carry it out. God always keeps his promises and wants us to follow his example. Be careful to follow through on whatever you promise to do.

Today, I pay my vows.

Proverbs 7:14

"I was due to offer peace offerings; today I have paid my vows.

Although this advice is directed toward young men, young women should heed it as well.

The person who has no purpose in life is simple-minded (Proverbs 7:7). Without aim or direction, an empty life is unstable, vulnerable to many temptations.

Even though the young man in this passage doesn't know where he is going, the adulteress knows where she wants him.

Notice her strategies: she is dressed to allure men

(Proverbs 7:10); her approach is bold (Proverbs 7:13); she invites him over to her place

(Proverbs 7:16-18); she cunningly answers his every objection

(Proverbs 7:19-20); she persuades him with smooth talk

(Proverbs 7:21); she traps him

(Proverbs 7:23). To combat temptation, make sure your life is full of God's Word and wisdom

(Proverbs 7:4). Recognize the strategies of temptation, and run away from them—fast.

Chapter 4

I will pay salvation from the Lord.

Jonah 2:9

But I will sacrifice to you with the voice of thanksgiving that which I have vowed I will pay Salvation is from the LORD."

Obviously Jonah was not in a position to bargain with God. Instead, he simply thanked God for saving his life. Our troubles should cause us to cling tightly to God, not attempt to bargain our way out of the pain. We can thank and praise God for what he has already done for us, and for his love and mercy.

It took a miracle of deliverance to get Jonah to do as God had commanded. As a prophet, Jonah was obligated to obey God's word, but he had tried to escape his responsibilities. At this time, he pledged to keep his vows. Jonah's story began with a tragedy, but a greater tragedy would have happened if God had allowed him to keep running. When you know God wants you to do something, don't run. God may not stop you as he did Jonah.

Samuel's mother makes a vow.

1 Samuel 1:11

She made a vow and said, "O LORD of hosts, if you will indeed look on the affliction of your maidservant and remember me, and not forget your maidservant, but will give your maidservant a son, then I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life, and a razor shall never come on his head."

Be careful what you promise in prayer because God may take you up on it. Hannah so desperately wanted a child that she was willing to strike a bargain with God. God took her up on her promise, and to Hannah's credit, she did her part, even though it was painful (1 Samuel 1:27-28).

Although we are not in a position to barter with God, he may still choose to answer a prayer that has an attached promise. When you pray, ask yourself, "Will I follow through on any promises I make to God if he grants my request?" It is dishonest and dangerous to ignore a promise, especially to God. God keeps his promises, and he expects you to keep yours.

Jacob makes a vow for God's protection.

Genesis 28:20-22

Then Jacob made a vow, saying, "If God will be with me and will keep me on this journey that I take, and will give me food to eat and garments to wear, and I return to my father's house in safety, then the LORD will be my God. "This stone, which I have set up as a pillar, will be God's house, and of all that you give me I will surely give a tenth to you."

Was Jacob trying to bargain with God? It is possible that he, in his ignorance of how to worship and serve God, treated God like a servant who would perform a service for a tip.

More likely, Jacob was not bargaining, but pledging his future to God. He may have been saying, in effect, "Because you have blessed me, I will follow you." Whether Jacob was bargaining or pledging, God blessed him. But God also had some difficult lessons for Jacob to learn.

Chapter 5

Israel makes a vow for help in time of war.

Numbers 21:2

So Israel made a vow to the LORD and said, "If You will indeed deliver this people into my hand, then I will utterly destroy their cities."

In Psalm 78, we learn the sources of Israel's complaining:

- (1) Their spirits were not faithful to God (Numbers 78:8);
- (2) They refused to obey God's law (Numbers 78:10);
- (3) They forgot the miracles God had done for them

(Numbers 78:11). Our complaining often has its roots in one of these thoughtless actions and attitudes.

If we can deal with the cause of our complaining, it will not take hold and grow in our lives.

Jephthah makes a vow.

Judges 11:30-40

And Jephthah vowed a vow unto the Lord, and said, if thou shalt without fail deliver the children of Ammon into mine hands,

Then it shall be, that whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the children of Ammon, shall surely be the Lord's, and I will offer it up for a burnt offering.

So Jephthah passed over unto the children of Ammon to fight against them; and the Lord delivered them into his hands.

And he smote them from Aroer, even till thou come to Minnith, even twenty cities, and unto the plain of the vineyards, with a very great slaughter. Thus the children of Ammon were subdued before the children of Israel.

And Jephthah came to Mizpeh unto his house, and, behold, his daughter came out to meet him with timbrels and with dances: and she was his only child; beside her he had neither son nor daughter.

And it came to pass, when he saw her, that he rent his clothes, and said, alas, my daughter! Thou hast brought me very low, and thou art one of them that trouble me: for I have opened my mouth unto the Lord, and I cannot go back.

And she said unto him, my father, if thou hast opened thy mouth unto the Lord, do to me according to that which hath proceeded out of thy mouth; forasmuch as the Lord hath taken vengeance for thee of thine enemies, even of the children of Ammon.

And she said unto her father, Let this thing be done for me: let me alone two months, that I may go up and down upon the mountains, and bewail my virginity, I and my fellows.

And he said, go. And he sent her away for two months: and she went with her companions, and bewailed her virginity upon the mountains.

And it came to pass at the end of two months that she returned unto her father, who did with her according to his vow which he had vowed: and

she knew no man. And it was a custom in Israel, that the daughters of Israel went yearly to lament the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite four days in a year.

In God's law, a vow was a promise to God that should not be broken (Numbers 30:1-2; Deut. 23:21-23). It carried as much force as a written contract. Many people made vows in Biblical times. Some, like Jephthah's, were very foolish.

When Jephthah made his vow, did he stop to consider that a person, not a sheep or goat, might come out to meet him? Scholars are divided over the issue.

Those who say Jephthah was considering human sacrifice use the following arguments: (1) He was from an area where pagan religion and human sacrifice were common. In his eyes, it may not have seemed like a sin. (2) Jephthah may not have had a background in religious law. Perhaps he was ignorant of God's command against human sacrifice.

Those who say Jephthah could not have been thinking about human sacrifice point to other evidence:

As leader of the people, Jephthah must have been familiar with God's laws; human sacrifice was clearly forbidden (Leviticus 18:21; Leviticus 20:1-5). (2) No legitimate priest would have helped Jephthah carry out his vow if a person was to be the sacrifice.

Whatever Jephthah had in mind when he made the vow, did he or did he not sacrifice his daughter? Some think he did, because his vow was to make a burnt offering. Some think he did not, and they offer several reasons:

(1) If the girl was to die, she would not have spent her last two months in the hills.

(2) God would not have honored a vow based on a wicked practice.

(3) Judges 11:39 says that she never married, not that she died, implying that she was set apart for service to God, not killed.

Absalom said he made a vow of service.

2 Samuel 15:7-8

Now it came about at the end of forty years that Absalom said to the king, "Please let me go and pay my vow which I have vowed to the LORD, in Hebron. "For your servant vowed a vow while I was living at Geshur in Aram, saying, 'If the LORD shall indeed bring me back to Jerusalem, then I will serve the LORD.'"

Absalom's political strategy was to steal the hearts of the people with his good looks, grand entrances, apparent concern for justice, and friendly embraces. Many were fooled and switched their allegiance. Later, however, Absalom proved to be an evil ruler.

We need to evaluate our leaders to make sure their charisma is not a mask covering graft, deception, or hunger for power. Make sure that underneath their style and charm, they are able to make good decisions and handle people wisely.

Chapter 6

My lips spoke when I was in distress.

Psalm 66:13-14

I shall come into Your house with burnt offerings; I shall pay You my vows, Which my lips uttered And my mouth spoke when I was in distress.

People sometimes make bargains with God, saying, “If you heal me (or get me out of this mess), I’ll obey you for the rest of my life.” However, soon after they recover, the vow is forgotten and the old life-style is resumed. This writer made a promise to God, but he remembered the promise and was prepared to carry it out.

God always keeps his promises and wants us to follow his example. Be careful to follow through on whatever you promise to do.

Render unto the Lord all his benefits.

Psalm 116:12-14

What shall I render to the LORD For all His benefits toward me? I shall lift up the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the LORD. I shall pay my vows to the LORD, Oh may it be in the presence of all His people.

God stays close to us even in death. When someone we love is nearing death, we may become angry and feel abandoned. But believers (saints) are precious to God, and he carefully chooses the time when they will be called into his presence.

Let this truth provide comfort when you've lost a loved one. God sees, and each life is valuable to him (see Jesus' statement in Matthew 10:29).

God cares and understands

Psalm 56:12

Your vows are binding upon me, O God; I will render thank offerings to you.

Even in our deepest sorrow, God cares! Jesus reminded us further of how much God understands us—he knows even the number of hairs on our heads (Matthew 10:30). Often we waver between faith and fear. When you feel so discouraged that you are sure no one understands, remember that God knows every problem and sees every tear.

A sacrifice of thanksgiving

Psalm 116:17-18

To You I shall offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving, and call upon the name of the LORD. I shall pay my vows to the LORD, Oh may it be in the presence of all His people,

God is so responsive that you can always reach him. He bends down and listens to your voice. This writer's love for the Lord had grown because he had experienced answers to his prayers. If you are discouraged, remember that God is near, listening carefully to every prayer and answering each prayer in order to give you his best.

Jonah 1:16

Then the men feared the LORD greatly, and they offered a sacrifice to the LORD and made vows.

Jonah had disobeyed God. While he was running away, he stopped and submitted to God. Then the ship's crew began to worship God because they saw the storm quiet down. God is able to use even our mistakes to help others come to know him.

It may be painful, but admitting our sins can be a powerful example to those who don't know God. Ironically, the pagan sailors did what the entire nation of Israel would not do—prayed to God and vowed to serve him.

I will pay my vows before those who fear him.

Psalm 22:25

From you comes my praise in the great assembly; I shall pay my vows before those who fear Him.

David would praise God in the congregation because his private deliverance deserved a public testimony. God wonderfully delivers us in the quiet moments when we are hurting, and we must be prepared to offer public praise for his care.

Chapter 7

I will pay my vows from day to day.

Psalm 61:8

So I will sing praise to your name forever, that I may pay my vows day by day.

David made a vow to praise God each day. David continually praised God through both the good and difficult times of his life. Do you find something to praise God for each day? As you do, you will find your heart elevated from daily distractions to lasting confidence.

To God, my vow will be performed.

Psalm 65:1

There will be silence before you, and praise in Zion, O God, and to you the vow will be performed.

The vow of a Nazirite

Numbers 6:1-21

Again the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, 'When a man or woman makes a special vow, the vow of a Nazirite, to dedicate himself to the LORD, he shall abstain from wine and strong drink; he shall drink no vinegar, whether made from wine or strong drink, nor shall he drink any grape juice nor eat fresh or dried grapes.

A blessing was one way of asking for God's divine favor to rest upon others. The ancient blessing in these verses helps us understand what a blessing was supposed to do.

A blessing has five parts conveyed hope that God would”

- (1) Bless and keep them (favor and protect);
- (2) Make his face shine upon them (be pleased);
- (3) Be gracious (merciful and compassionate);
- (4) Turn his face toward them (give his approval);
- (5) Give peace.

When you ask God to bless others or yourself, you are asking him to do these five things. The blessing you offer will not only help the one receiving it, it will also demonstrate love, encourage others, and provide a model of caring to others.

I will find a habitation for my God

Psalm 132:2-5

Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house, nor go up into my bed; I will not give sleep to mine eyes, or slumber to mine eyelids, Until I find out a place for the Lord, an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob.

Paul was keeping a vow.

Acts 18:18

Paul, having remained many days longer, took leave of the brethren and put out to sea for Syria, and with him were Priscilla and Aquila in Cenchrea he had his hair cut, for he was keeping a vow.

This vow Paul took was probably a temporary Nazirite vow that ended with shaving of the head and offering the hair as a sacrifice (Numbers 6:18).

Acts 21:24-26

Take them and purify yourself along with them, and pay their expenses so that they may shave their heads; and all will know that there is nothing to the things which they have been told about you, but that you yourself also walk orderly, keeping the Law.

"But concerning the Gentiles who have believed, we wrote, having decided that they should abstain from meat sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what is strangled and from fornication."

Then Paul took the men, and the next day, purifying himself along with them, went into the temple giving notice of the completion of the days of purification, until the sacrifice was offered for each one of them.

Wrong speech invalidates the word of God.

Matthew 15:5-6

"But you say, 'Whoever says to his father or mother, "Whatever I have that would help you has been given to God," he is not to honor his father or his mother.' And by this you invalidated the word of God for the sake of your tradition.

This was the practice of *Corban* (literally, "offering"; see Mark 7:11). Anyone who made a Corban vow was required to dedicate money to God's temple that otherwise would have gone to support his parents.

Corban had become a religiously acceptable way to neglect parents, circumventing the child's responsibility to them. Although the action—giving money to God—seemed worthy and no doubt conferred prestige on the giver, many people who took the Corban vow were disregarding God's command to care for needy parents. These religious leaders were ignoring God's clear command to honor their parents.

Mark 7:11-13

but you say, 'If a man says to his father or his mother, whatever I have that would help you is Corban (that is to say, given to God),' you no longer permit him to do anything for his father or his mother; thus invalidating the word of God by your tradition which you have handed down; and you do many things such as that."

The Pharisees used God as an excuse to avoid helping their families. They thought it was more important to put money in the temple treasury than to help their needy parents, although God's law specifically says to honor fathers and mothers (Exodus 20:12) and to care for those in need (Leviticus 25:35-43). (For an explanation of *Corban*, see the note on +Matthew 15:5-6.) We should give money and time to God, but we must never use God as an excuse to neglect our responsibilities. Helping those in need is one of the most important ways to honor God.

We will perform our vows that we have vowed.

Jeremiah 44:25-28

Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, as follows: 'As for you and your wives, you have spoken with your mouths and fulfilled it with your hands, saying,

"We will certainly perform our vows that we have vowed, to burn sacrifices to the queen of heaven and pour out drink offerings.

Matthew 11:28
Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden,
and I will give you rest.



To ask Jesus to come into your heart please pray this Prayer:

Dear Lord Jesus, I believe you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. I ask you to forgive me of my sins and coming into my heart. I accept you as savior and will follow you as Lord. Amen.

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