

Second Baptist Church of Doylestown
Bible Study Notes
2-23-22
Numbers 30

The Requirement To Keep Vows – Verses 1-2

¹ Moses said to the heads of the tribes of Israel: “This is what the LORD commands: ² When a man makes a vow to the LORD or takes an oath to obligate himself by a pledge, he must not break his word but must do everything he said.

30:1-2 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.

30:2 Because God takes our vows so seriously, sometimes it is better not to make a vow. When you make a vow to God, do not delay to pay it; for He has no pleasure in fools. Pay what you have vowed. It is better not to vow than to vow and not pay. (Ecclesiastes 5:4-5)

Many vows are just plain foolish. "I'll never do that again" is a foolish vow, and it is foolish and unwise to demand such a vow from someone else. Of course, there is a vow we all can and should make - a vow to praise God: Vows made to You are binding upon me, O God; I will render praises unto You. (Psalm 56:12) So I will sing praise to Your name forever, that I may daily perform my vows. (Psalm 61:8)

Vows That Are Not Binding – Verses 3-5

³ “When a young woman still living in her father’s household makes a vow to the LORD or obligates herself by a pledge ⁴ and her father hears about her vow or pledge but says nothing to her, then all her vows and every pledge by which she obligated herself will stand. ⁵ But if her father forbids her when he hears about it, none of her vows or the pledges by which she obligated herself will stand; the LORD will release her because her father has forbidden her.

30:3-4 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.

30:5 And binds herself by some agreement while in her father's house in her youth: An unmarried woman's vow was not taken as binding, unless approved of in some way by her "head" - her father, who had the right to overrule her.

A Wife's Vow Overruled By Her Husband – Verses 6-8

6 “If she marries after she makes a vow or after her lips utter a rash promise by which she obligates herself **7** and her husband hears about it but says nothing to her, then her vows or the pledges by which she obligated herself will stand. **8** But if her husband forbids her when he hears about it, he nullifies the vow that obligates her or the rash promise by which she obligates herself, and the LORD will release her.

30:6 If her husband overrules her on the day that he hears it, he shall make void her vow which she took: A married woman’s vow was not taken as binding, unless ratified in some way by her husband, who had the right to overrule her.

A Widow Or A Divorced Woman Is Bound By Her Vows – Verse 9

9 “Any vow or obligation taken by a widow or divorced woman will be binding on her.

30:9 Any vow of a widow or a divorced woman: A widow or divorced woman had no male "head" of her household (her "head" is God directly), so she is bound by her vows.

A Wife's Vow Confirmed By Her Husband – Verses 10-16

10 “If a woman living with her husband makes a vow or obligates herself by a pledge under oath **11** and her husband hears about it but says nothing to her and does not forbid her, then all her vows or the pledges by which she obligated herself will stand. **12** But if her husband nullifies them when he hears about them, then none of the vows or pledges that came from her lips will stand. Her husband has nullified them, and the LORD will release her. **13** Her husband may confirm or nullify any vow she makes or any sworn pledge to deny herself. **14** But if her husband says nothing to her about it from day to day, then he confirms all her vows or the pledges binding on her. He confirms them by saying nothing to her when he hears about them. **15** If, however, he nullifies them some time after he hears about them, then he must bear the consequences of her wrongdoing.” **16** These are the regulations the LORD gave Moses concerning relationships between a man and his wife, and between a father and his young daughter still living at home.

30:10 If she vowed in her husband's house: If the husband confirmed his wife's vow (either specifically or by silence), then he was responsible to make sure the vow was fulfilled (he shall bear her guilt, Numbers 30:15). "He shall bear her iniquity means he will suffer for the broken vow as though it were his."

30:12 Every vow and every binding oath to afflict her soul, her husband may confirm it, or her husband may make it void: This is an outworking of the principle of headship. When God declares someone to be in a position of rightful authority and others are expected to submit to that authority, the head also is accountable before God for the result. God never grants authority without accountability. When this is understood, it makes submission much easier.