

TEXT Deuteronomy 23:21-23; 1 Samuel 1:9-18,24-28; Ecclesiastes 5:2,4,5

SUPPLEMENTAL SCRIPTURE Genesis 28:10-22

OBJECTIVE The students will be able to explain that a vow is a voluntary promise to God to perform some service or do something pleasing to Him. Vows are not regarded as a religious necessity. But once they have been made, they must be considered sacred and binding, so they must not be made rashly.

KEY VERSE FOR ANSWER Pay thy vows unto the most High. — Psalm 50:14

KEY VERSE FOR SEARCH I will pay thee my vows, which my lips have uttered, and my mouth hath spoken, when I was in trouble. — Psalm 66:13,14

ANSWER
TITLE:

SEARCH
TITLE:

Is It Really Necessary?

Vows

REFERENCE INFORMATION

Samuel was the son of Elkanah and Hannah who were of the tribe of Levi. He was born in 1171 B.C. Ramah, which is about six miles north of Jerusalem, was his birthplace, judicial residence, and place of burial. While still a child, he was dedicated to God for life under the Nazarite vow (Numbers 6).

The weaning of a child is an important event in the do-

mestic life of the East. In many places it is celebrated by a festive gathering of friends, by feasting, by religious ceremonies, and sometimes the formal presentation of rice into the child's diet. Among the peasant Arabs of Palestine, babies are often nursed for two years, and sometimes for four or even five years. It wasn't until after Hannah weaned Samuel that she took him to live with Eli the priest in the house of the Lord. (1 Samuel 1:23,24).

YOUR OPENER

Vows

TEXT: Deuteronomy 23:21-23; 1 Samuel 1:9-18,24-28; Ecclesiastes 5:2,4,5

SUPPLEMENTAL SCRIPTURE: Genesis 28:10-22

KEY VERSE: I will pay thee my vows, which my lips have uttered, and my mouth hath spoken, when I was in trouble. — Psalm 66:13,14

RESPONSES

1. From our text and supplemental Scripture it can be seen that vows have a specific value, particularly when there is a special need for God's help and intervention. People are sometimes prompted to make vows during a time of trouble, from a desire to do something to honor God, or to do something in His service. Lead the discussion to show how God honors those whose vows are sincere, and gives them the desires of their hearts.

2. When Hannah explained her situation she received Eli's blessing, and from the Lord she received peace of mind and a happy countenance. The Lord also gave her the desire of her heart. Bring out through discussion that true worship of God is in Spirit. It is not necessary to shout loudly to be heard by God, though at times a person may feel a need to cry aloud. See Esther 4:1.

3. Hannah paid her vow as soon as Samuel was weaned. Help your group to talk about the expediency of paying vows at the earliest opportunity. Ask your students what excuses Hannah might have used to put off taking Samuel to the Temple. Ask why it is that the sooner vows are paid, the easier and the better. Bring out that putting off paying a vow makes it harder and more difficult to pay. Conclude by pointing out that God honored Hannah's fidelity by giving her three additional sons and two daughters.

A vow is a specific promise made to God, a voluntary covenant sometimes made in a time of trouble. A vow may be to give a gift, to do something to honor God, to do something in His service, or perhaps to abstain from doing a certain thing. Our service to God does not necessarily demand vows of us, but when a vow is made, God requires that it be paid. Therefore a vow should not be made rashly.

1. There is a difference between a vow and a consecration. A vow is a special promise that a person pledges to God, that which would not necessarily be included in his consecrations. God requires consecrations of our lives, our talents, and our time. Of what value, then, is a vow? When are vows often made?

2. In Hannah's vow, she spoke in her heart; her lips moved but her voice was not heard. She was misunderstood by Eli, the priest, but how do we know that God received her vow?

3. How soon did Hannah pay her vow? Why should we be quick to pay our vows?

ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION NOTES

4. In our text the Bible speaks about being rash with our mouth in connection with making vows. In other words, the writer would admonish us to proceed with caution or deliberation when making vows to God. Vows are sacred to God and binding upon the person who makes them. Under what circumstances might a vow be considered a sin?

5. The Bible says that the man who does not pay his vow is a fool. What circumstances might cause a person to not want to pay his vow?

6. In his vow Jacob asked for God to keep him, for raiment to wear, for bread to eat, and for a return to father's house in peace. If God would do these things for him, then Jacob would do certain things for God. What advantage would Jacob gain by making this vow—a voluntary promise to God?

7. In his vow, Jacob promised that the Lord would be his God, the pillar would become God's house, and that he would pay tithes of all that God gave him. What evidence do we have that Jacob paid his vow? See Genesis 32:24-30; 35:6-15.

4. Our text in Deuteronomy 23:21 indicates that a vow would become a sin to the person who does not pay his vow to God. Your class may also bring up that it would be a sin to vow something contrary to God's law. For instance, the men who purposed to kill Paul were vowing to do something that would be a sin. But if one considers a vow to be only a promise to God to do something to please Him, then, of course, the only sin would be to not do what was vowed.

5. Encourage students to give their answers. Discussion of this question should lead to the thought that perhaps the consequences of paying the vow were not carefully considered, or perhaps it was a rash vow, hence difficult to pay. Point out that it is better not to vow than to vow and not pay, whatever the reason. God demands that we consider our promises to Him before they are made. See Ecclesiastes 5:6. If one vows and does not pay he becomes a liar to God. Discuss this serious aspect of not paying a vow.

6. Jacob would gain the advantage of having God's help. Discuss with the class that Jacob was in serious trouble, running for his life. Some of the items mentioned in his vow, Jacob might have worked out on his own, but others he could not. With God's help he could be sure of all. Jacob felt a vow was in order and seemed to respond unhesitatingly. Bring out that a sincere vow has a keen advantage in our service to God.

7. Discuss with the students that at Peniel Jacob prayed all night to obtain God's blessing, thus showing that the Lord was his God. In Genesis 35:6-15 the record is given of Jacob's return to and worship of God at Bethel, the pillar he had set up when he fled from Esau. No account is given of Jacob's paying his tithes to God, but we may be sure he did so. Wrap up the lesson by reviewing instances of how God blesses those who truly desire to draw closer to Him through a voluntary promise to do something for Him. But also discuss the utmost importance of being aware of what we promise, being sure that we can fulfill our part, then doing so at the earliest possible time.

YOUR WRAP-UP

SUPPLEMENTAL QUESTIONS

Does God require you to make vows in order to be a Christian? Give a reason for your answer.

If you were to do a character analysis, what would you say about Eli? Hannah? Elkanah?

What does Deuteronomy 23:21-23 mean?

Would you say it is wise or unwise to make a vow to God? Give your reason.

Why is a vow not to be broken?

In our ANSWER story, what vow did Shawn make and why? Do you think he really needed to keep it for a whole year?

What might prompt a person to make a vow?

Did Hannah consider her vow to God important?

Did she put off payment of her vow as long as possible?

THINGS TO DO

Show your students a broken vase, dish, or glass. (If you don't have one, break an inexpensive container like a peanut butter jar, baby food jar, or pop bottle.) Point out that it is of little value or beauty now, and will no longer fulfill the purpose for which it was intended. So it is with broken vows.

God is hurt if we do not follow through on our vows. We are hurt also, and may even suffer eternal loss. The love relationship between God and us is broken. In order to regain that relationship, we must renew and pay our vows.

On separate cards write different synonyms for the word vow. Examples: (verbs) promise, pledge, guarantee, commit, assure, devote, (nouns) oath, word, assurance. Let your students choose a card and give their definition

of the word they chose. Talk about how they are all typical of a vow. But let them know that a vow to God is a much more serious thing. It is like a contract with God. The Bible tells us we must be careful in deciding to make a vow. It is not a little thing. It must be kept. God said it is better not to make a vow than to break a vow. Remember, vows are not required by God.

Bring a copy of a sales contract or a lease. Go over the different points and bring out that these are binding on both parties (or all parties) to the agreement. Broken contracts will bring hurt, loss, disagreements, and may even result in lawsuits.

Answers for ANSWER

