

**The Foolish Vow**  
**Judges 11:29-40**  
**10-5-15 PM**

Most of us are familiar with the story of the Judge Jephthah in Judges 11:29-40. He made a vow to offer as a burnt offering the first thing that came out of his home, and that was his only daughter. We need to remember that this record was for our understanding (1 Corinthians 10:11).

God has made it exceptionally clear how He feels about our vows. He has repeatedly said in a variety of ways that we MUST keep any vow we make to Him (Deuteronomy 23:21, Numbers 30:2, Ecclesiastes 5:4-5, Malachi 1:14, 1 Timothy 5:11-12).

There is some question as to whether Jephthah actually put his daughter to death. There were some exceptions in the Law of Moses on making vows, (consider Leviticus 5:4-6 (the sinful vow) and Leviticus 27:1 (the valuation of a vow)). However, it seems that because Jephthah's vow was intentional and clear, he likely carried out his promise of taking his daughter's life. This terrible act (an abomination to God, Jeremiah 32:35) is likely meant to serve to tell us that breaking our vows is a hideous abomination before God.

Our problem is that we live in a society that breaks vows constantly. Politicians make and break vows constantly to get elected. In business, complicated contracts are required to compel companies to keep their promises. 40% of marriages end in divorce, a sign that people don't keep their vows. This condition tends to rub off on us as well.

Do we make vows without considering the costs? In Proverbs 20:25 we are warned not to make a vow without knowing what it is we are promising. Jesus said in Luke 14:28 that we are to count the cost of our commitments before we make them. DO we count the cost of our promises, or do we make them rashly?

Consider some of the vows we make. There are private vows of pleading (Psalm 66:13-14); do we promise something to God in exchange for our petitions? Consider our public vows of marriage (Malachi 2:14); are we keeping the vows (vows like "to love, honor and obey" or "cherish and nurture") we made before God and men in marriage? How about our most important vow: our holy vows of submission called "The Confession"? "For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Romans 10:10). The word "Confess" can mean a promise/pledge, a vow.

Ultimately the confession is your holiest vow. Many times Scripture invokes our vow as something to be kept (I Timothy 5:12-14, Hebrews 4:14, Hebrews 10:23). You "keep" this vow by abiding in Christ. Breaking this vow leads to the unholy rejections (Hebrews 10:26-29, II Peter 2:20-22). Thus, when we consider the danger of making a haphazard vow, we are promising things that have eternal consequences.

Jephthah's vow was foolish because he had not considered the cost. Maybe he thought something worthless would come out, a dog or a chicken. But he was unprepared for the loss his foolish vow would cost him. Are we foolish in our vows to God? In our vows in marriage before God? Can we say that our word is "Yes, Yes" and "No, No", as Jesus insisted in Matthew 5:37?