

Leviticus Chapter 27 - John Karmelich

1. My title for this chapter is "Putting Your Money Where Your Mouth is".
 - a) This is an old cliché used with gamblers. It is one thing to claim you can do something special. It is another to put your own money on the line to back-up that claim.
 - b) Let me use a golf illustration: Suppose you hit the ball thirty feet from the hole. You then brag to your golfing buddies, "I'm positive I can make this in one shot." Your friends, who are convinced you can't make it in one shot, want to bet you and say, "Put your money where your mouth is".
 - c) Believe it or not, this is the main theme of Leviticus 27. No, not betting. ☺ It is about making vows and keeping them. The whole chapter is about voluntary vows. There is nothing compulsory in this chapter. At the same time, God says in effect, "OK, you want to make that vow? Put your money where your mouth is. There is going to be a financial cost associated with whatever vow you make." God wants us to understand that whatever vow we make has a financial cost associated with that vow.
 - d) Let me give you an example from this chapter: Suppose you make the boast, "My house is dedicated to serving God". In the Levitical laws of this chapter, your house really does now belong to God if you make that vow. You now have to pay rent to live in that house as it belongs to God. You can also buy back your "former" house, at a specified price.
2. So why is this chapter here? The idea is to think about any vows one makes prior to actually making them. To verbally make a vow doesn't cost you anything. If a vow is now financially significant, one is going to think twice before actually making that vow.
 - a) Jesus himself said we have to count the cost when we make a commitment to follow Him (See Luke 14:28). Jesus said in effect, "Before you commit your life to following Me, stop and think about what you are really doing."
 - b) Everything in this chapter is about voluntary vows made from us to God. It is much more specific than the salvation commitment. We are now in the last chapter of Leviticus. Salvation is old news. ☺ This is about our daily commitment to God as His followers. Specific types of vows are brought up in this final chapter of Leviticus.
 - c) Think about when people make vows: They are usually at big emotional experiences. It is usually when we are in big trouble. People will say, "Dear God, if you promise to get me out of this really bad situation, I promise to do some great act for You". Assuming we do get out of that situation, God takes that commitment seriously. This is about keeping our word. Again, the entire chapter is filled with the word "if". There are no required vows in this chapter. There are only rules once we make any vows.
 - d) Remember the bible has a pattern of 1) God does things for us and 2) here is how we are to respond. Many bible books start with stories or examples of what God has done for us. Laws are then given to describe how we are to respond to what God has done for us. In Exodus, God rescues the Israelites out of Egypt. God then says in effect, "OK, now that you're all grateful for what I have done, here are the new rules I want you to live by!"
 - i) Most of Paul's letters also fall into that pattern. Paul opens most of his letters describing the grace of God and our salvation. Paul then describes what is required or requested of Christians in response to that salvation.
 - ii) The issue of Chapter 27 is about the issue of going over and above what God asks us to do. In a sense, we are done with all of God's requirements for the Israelites and how they are to live. The final chapter of Leviticus is if an Israelite wants to go over and beyond what is required of them.
 - iii) This chapter is God saying in effect, "You want to do something for Me over and above what I required? Well, ok, you don't have to, but if you do, here are the rules that go with making such a commitment."

3. I also want you to see this chapter on "vows" in context of the previous chapter:
 - a) Remember the last chapter was all about blessings and curses. God said in effect that if the Israelites were obedient to God, they would be blessed tremendously. God then said in effect if the Israelites were disobedient, they would be cursed tremendously.
 - b) Now think about what I said about vows and emotions: We are most likely to make such vows to God when we are either in a high or low emotional state.
 - i) A positive vow might be, "Lord, you have blessed me life so much, I want to give more to you. I have already given you what is required of me, but You have out-given me back what I have given you. Here, take some more sheep." ☺
 - ii) A negative vow might be, "Lord, I have turned against You. I'm so sorry for what I have done. Here, let me make it up to you. Let me do what is required and go over and above that in order to make it up."
 - c) Now here's the important part: Nothing in this chapter is required.
 - i) In fact, there is no positive or negative commentary on these vows. Nowhere does God say, "I will bless you more if you make one of these vows or curse you more if you don't make one of these vows." The chapter is very neutral on whether or not one should make these vows. The only commentary on the vows is God saying in effect, "If you do make vows, you play by My rules, no exceptions."
 - d) This gets back to the reason this chapter is last in Leviticus. We're "done" with what is required to be holy. That word "holy" describes how we are to live a life to be fully pleasing to God. The only thing left to describe is what to do when people go over and beyond what is required of them. God is laying out rules for that situation.
4. It is important at this point to talk about Christians and vows.
 - a) Jesus said in effect don't make vows. Let your "yes be yes and your no be no". (See Matthew 5:33-37). What Jesus meant by that was for us to be people of our word.
 - b) In other words, if we say, "I swear on a stack of bibles I'm telling the truth, does that mean we shouldn't be trusted when we're not swearing on that tall stack?" ☺
 - c) When one reads about vows here, one should think of "commitments". When Jesus was talking about vows, the idea was not to go overboard and make a big deal about keeping one's word. If we decide to make a commitment, we should say either yes or no and follow through. If we still do make such commitments, Leviticus 27 teaches us how to deal with such commitments.
 - d) What is at stake is us being men and women of our word. If people can't trust us in our daily commitments in life, how can they ever trust us when we tell them about God? There are few things in life more important than being a trustworthy person.
5. Since this is the last lesson on Leviticus, I'm going to wrap up the lesson with some concluding comments about Leviticus as a whole. The last page of this lesson has my sources that I used to prepare these lessons. My gratitude for those of you who take the time to read these lessons. I hope they have blessed your life as much as mine.
6. There is a verse coming up in this chapter that is one of my "life verses" for my day job.
 - a) As I mentioned a few lessons back, I make my living as a real estate appraiser.
 - b) Did you know that a job of the priests were to be appraisers? When people gave things to God, often they have a right to those things back, with interest. The priests have to set a value on what is given to God in case the original owners want to buy it back. In other words, they have to appraise it. This includes real estate as well as other commodities.
 - c) The fact priests are called to be appraisers reminds me that I am accountable to God, as well as my clients in being "fair and just" in estimating the market value of real estate.
7. Final opening question: Are Christians required to keep these requirements if we make a vow?
 - a) For starters, many of them don't apply today. We don't have sacrificial animals to give to Levitical priests. I do believe the principals very much apply. God is interested in us keeping our word.

- b) Let's say we have some extra property and we make a vow before God to give that property to our local church. God then expects us to follow through. Again, we are under no compulsion to give that property, but once we give our word, God expects us to follow through.
- c) In the New Testament, there is only one case of someone being killed by God directly. That was a husband and wife couple. Both of them made a vow to give their property to the Christian church. The text makes it clear they were under no obligation to donate their property. The sin was lying about the amount of the donation. They promised to give everything from the sale proceeds and they only gave part. Peter then predicted they would die for this sin. Both of them died within moments of that announcement. This is all covered in Acts 5, Verses 1-11. That couple may be in heaven. This is not a salvation issue. The point here is they made a vow, and God killed them as an example to us that He takes voluntary vows seriously. This does not mean God kills all Christians who fail to keep vows. This does mean that God takes our vows seriously.
- d) Let's suppose a wild animal is attacking us. We then vow, "Dear God, if you get me out of this situation unscathed, ☺ I'll become a pastor or priest and sign up for bible college." God then expects us to keep that vow. I do believe God puts us in situations in order to motivate us for some action. Remember the last chapter had lots of curses. The purpose of those curses was to motivate the Israelite to turn back to God. My point is I do believe God uses negative situations to motivate us.
 - i) At the same time, going over and above what God requires of us is well, not required. God is more than happy, in fact overjoyed, if we just agree to commit our lives to Him as He requires. The purpose of this chapter is when we go over and above what God requires of us. God then says in effect, "Well, ok. You didn't have to do this. Since you made that decision, I'm going to hold you to it. If you are going to be My representative, your word must be trustworthy and therefore I am holding you responsible to keep your word."
- e) It is also important to understand that a vow cannot violate another biblical law. For example, if one vows to God to kill someone, that vow is not binding as it violates other biblical laws. That "vow" now becomes a sin.

8. With that said, let's get vowing! ☺

9. Verse 1: The LORD said to Moses, ² "Speak to the Israelites and say to them: `If anyone makes a special vow to dedicate persons to the LORD by giving equivalent values,

- a) Let me explain what is going on here. Suppose someone says, "I love God so much I want to do something special for Him. I want to give God one of my children for service or give God myself as a sign of dedication.
- b) God's response is my title for this lesson: "Put your money where your mouth is".
 - i) Talk is cheap. In order to actually perform this vow, God sets a monetary value for people and then says in effect, "You want to dedicate a person to God? Fine, then pay this amount of money to the priests as that is what they are worth."
 - ii) When you dedicate yourself to God, (or say, a family member), you now have to pay a lump sum to the church in order to buy back your life. The idea of the fee is you now belong to God. In order to get your life back, a fee for your life (or the life of the one dedicated) must be paid to the priest.
 - iii) The money figure was designed to discourage people from just verbally making such a vow. The Israelites were to understand that if they actually made such a vow, they had to pay some monetary price to go with that vow.
- c) Hey John, how do you know they had to pay a financial price for their lives? That is not stated in these two verses. The answer is in Verse 8: "If anyone making the vow is too poor to pay the specified amount." Verse 8 tells us that when one makes this vow, there is a specific sum that must be paid to God.

10. Verses 3: set the value of a male between the ages of twenty and sixty at fifty shekels of silver, according to the sanctuary shekel; ⁴ and if it is a female, set her value at thirty shekels. ⁵ If it is a person between the ages of five and twenty, set the value of a male at twenty shekels and of a female at ten shekels. ⁶ If it is a person between one month and five years, set the value of a male at five shekels of silver and that of a female at three shekels of silver. ⁷ If it is a person sixty years old or more, set the value of a male at fifteen shekels and of a female at ten shekels.
- a) In Verses 3-7, God gives a specific monetary value based on age and sex. For example, a man between 20-60 years of age is valued at 50 shekels of silver and a woman of the same age is valued at 30 shekels. Young men and women get lower amounts and children get even lower amounts.
 - b) First of all, this has nothing to do with whether or not men or more valuable than woman. (I'm doing my best to refrain from telling a bad joke here. ☺) Paul says "There is neither...male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." (Galatians 3:28 NIV). Paul's point is that we are all "one" in Christ and God weighs each sex the same.
 - c) The amount of money was based on one's ability to do physical labor in the field. These prices were roughly what a slave was worth: An adult male sold for a higher price than a female slave because the male was physically stronger and could do more. A child sold for less as the slave owner had to take care of the child prior to being of any service.
 - d) In other words, these "appraised values" were roughly what the Israelites were accustomed to in their civilization at that time. It has nothing to do with one's actual standing before God or one's actual worth. A 20-year old man had the same fifty shekel price as a 60-year old man. Remember the person making the vow had to pay this fee. A 20-60 year old man had more money in his pocket than a woman and God set a higher standard on the male for that reason.
 - e) Remember this is all about voluntary vows. Let's suppose one wants to dedicate their child to God. This is a common ritual in many Protestant churches. Personally, I like the idea of having to fork out money for this action. It reminds the donor that God takes this seriously and there is a price that goes with any vow that is made.
 - f) For the record, I'm not going to go into a great discussion of what a "shekel" is worth, or the specific monetary value of each age group and sex. If you're like me, you're going to forget the details in a short time anyway. What is important to remember is the principal behind the verses: There is a physical price to pay when one makes a vow to God and God sets the standard based on what a person "normally" can afford.
11. Verse 8: If anyone making the vow is too poor to pay the specified amount, he is to present the person to the priest, who will set the value for him according to what the man making the vow can afford.
- a) Let's suppose someone wants to dedicate themselves to God and that person can't afford this specified amount. The priest then becomes an "appraiser". The priest figures out a fair value based on what the person can afford and that person must pay that figure then on the spot.
 - b) God is still holding the vow-maker to their commitment and one can't use poverty as an excuse to get out of that vow.
 - c) The role of the priest is to make the person understand that one should not make such a vow in rash and such a vow is really going to cost them something.
 - d) Remember in my introduction that Jesus said to "count the cost". A role of us Christian "priests" (that's all Christians!) is to minister (help) other Christians. In times of counseling, it might be our role to help others understand the cost of making whatever decision they choose to make. That would be our role as priests to "financially appraise" the situation at hand. (I'll refrain from my occupational reference here and wait until we discuss real estate in Verse 14. ☺)

12. Verse 9: " `If what he vowed is an animal that is acceptable as an offering to the LORD, such an animal given to the LORD becomes holy. ¹⁰ He must not exchange it or substitute a good one for a bad one, or a bad one for a good one; if he should substitute one animal for another, both it and the substitute become holy. ¹¹ If what he vowed is a ceremonially unclean animal--one that is not acceptable as an offering to the LORD--the animal must be presented to the priest, ¹² who will judge its quality as good or bad. Whatever value the priest then sets, that is what it will be. ¹³ If the owner wishes to redeem the animal, he must add a fifth to its value.
- a) We now switch topics from "vowing people" to "vowing animals".
 - b) In the earlier verses, if a person wanted to give a family member or themselves to God for service, they paid a specific sum of money, which is the equivalent of "buying those people back" as they belonged to God when the vow was made.
 - c) Now we have a situation where people voluntarily give animals for the priests to use. It would be like giving a donation to one's church, but instead of writing a check, one just drops off a horse, a donkey, or a cow. They must have a big church collection plate. ☺
 - d) The first thing these verses say if that one gives an animal, it immediately becomes "holy". It doesn't mean the animal gets religious. ☺ It means that animal now belongs to God. The term "holy" refers to one being fully dedicated of their lives to God.
 - e) The rest of the text deals with specific rules about how one gives an animal.
 - i) Part of the idea is one cannot change their mind without paying a price. Once an animal is given to God, one cannot exchange it for another.
 - ii) Even if the person giving the animal insists upon exchanging them, both animals become "holy". The animal being kept must be used for God in some way.
 - iii) If you recall way back in Chapter 11, there was a list of animals that were considered "clean and unclean". One can give an unclean animal (Verse 11) for the personal use of the priests. For example, a donkey is an "unclean" animal, but the priests could still use a donkey for transportation. It is an acceptable gift.
 - iv) An "unclean" animal is one that God says is not fit for sacrifice or eating. Again, the details are back in Chapter 11 as to why certain animals are picked.
 - v) The point of Verse 12 is if an "unclean" animal is donated, the priest has to appraise (there's that word again! ☺) the animal's value. The donor then has the option of redeeming an unclean animal, but has to pay 20% more than the appraised value as set by the priest.
 - f) The main idea of this paragraph is similar to the last section on "people-dedication". The idea is that such vows are voluntary, but if one chooses to make such a vow, one must play by God's rules in making such vows. Such vows come with a monetary price. In some cases, the person can go back on their word (i.e., if they donated an "unclean" animal), but one has to pay a fine for such an action.
 - g) Again, God never condones these vows. God wants to bless us simply because He wants to bless us. He wants us to be obedient to what He commands for us. It is human nature (i.e., our big egos) to want to go over and above what is required of us. God then sighs and says in effect, "OK, if you want to go over and above, here are the rules."
 - i) If anything, these rules appear to be discouraging making vows. All of these vows come with monetary prices and even fines for changing one's mind.
13. Verse 14: "If a man dedicates his house as something holy to the LORD, the priest will judge its quality as good or bad. Whatever value the priest then sets, so it will remain. ¹⁵ If the man who dedicates his house redeems it, he must add a fifth to its value, and the house will again become his.
- a) OK, everyone, we now switch from animals to real estate. Time for my fellow real estate professionals out there to pay attention. ☺
 - b) The idea is if a person wants to dedicate their house to God, the priest appraises the house. If the person wants to buy it back, the price is now the appraised value plus 20%.

- c) Often Christians will take their house and privately or publicly declare their house belongs to God. If this was ancient Israel and they did that, a priest would come knocking on the door and demand "his" rent as the house now belongs to God.
 - d) This was done in cases where a person had more than one place to live, or is moving away, and makes a voluntary vow to give that house for the priests to use. Again, the person making the donation had to right to buy it back. It had to be at the appraised value, "plus a fifth" (Verse 15), which is a 20% penalty of the appraised value.
 - e) OK, time to address my fellow real estate appraisers: Whether or not you realize it, you are taking on a role that God gave to the priests. God held the Israelite priests to a much higher standard than the "average" Israelite. God expected the priest to be honest in their dealings, and that including estimating the fair market value of property.
 - i) So the next appraisal report that we do, consider that we're not only accountable to our clients, but we are accountable to God for being honest in such work.
 - ii) The good news for us real estate appraisers is we can now state that our profession is "biblical". The bad news is we know understand we are accountable to God as to be honest in our dealings.
 - iii) A quick word to any young appraiser out there: Never compromise your integrity for any amount of money. Beware of people trying to deceive you. You are only as good as your reputation. As tempting as it is to "make the value work" in order to please the client or make more income, in the long run, every veteran of our industry will tell you its not worth it and to be fair in one's valuation.
14. Verse 16: " If a man dedicates to the LORD part of his family land, its value is to be set according to the amount of seed required for it--fifty shekels of silver to a homer of barley seed. ¹⁷ If he dedicates his field during the Year of Jubilee, the value that has been set remains. ¹⁸ But if he dedicates his field after the Jubilee, the priest will determine the value according to the number of years that remain until the next Year of Jubilee, and its set value will be reduced. ¹⁹ If the man who dedicates the field wishes to redeem it, he must add a fifth to its value, and the field will again become his. ²⁰ If, however, he does not redeem the field, or if he has sold it to someone else, it can never be redeemed. ²¹ When the field is released in the Jubilee, it will become holy, like a field devoted to the LORD; it will become the property of the priests.
- a) OK, Verses 14-15 were for the residential real estate appraisers. Verses 16-21 are for the farm appraisers and land appraisers of the world. ☺
 - b) God is giving the priests some fairly complicated instructions on how to value land that is being given to the priests. The idea is like a house, the person making the donations can buy the land back (with some exceptions), but again, has to make a 20% penalty.
 - c) If you recall from Chapter 25, there was this special year called the "year of Jubilee". It occurred every 50 years. At that year, all land went back to its original owner and their descendants. At that year, all debts are forgiven. Remember the land of Israel was divided into 12 tribes. This way, nobody could be a land baron. All land went back to the decedents of the 12 tribes every 50 years.
 - i) This is why valuing land is complicated. The priest had to appraise the land based on how many years were left until the next year of Jubilee.
 - ii) Let's say someone wanted to give land to the priest right after the year of Jubilee. That land will not revert to the original owners for another 50 years. God said the value is "fifty shekels of silver to a homer of barley seed". In other words, one estimated how much barley can be planted on that land. One then has 50 years worth of barley that could be produced and the fair market value was estimated based on those calculations. (How did they do this before computers? ☺)
 - iii) Now lets say someone make a donation with say, 5 years left until the next year of Jubilee. The priest had to appraise the value based on five years worth of farming.
 - iv) The point is the priest is to be an appraiser and take into account the jubilee year.

- d) Verse 20 also gives another issue: What if the person who gives the land does not want to buy it back and pay the 20% fine? God then says that land then becomes the property of priests permanently. The point is the donor has the right to buy it back, but is not forced to. Remember the jubilee year was used for making appraisal calculations; it was not a requirement of the donor to buy it back.
- e) OK John, I'm happy you're an appraiser. I'm not. ☺ How does this apply to my life?
- i) Any of us can give some of our property to say, a charity or a church. God is instigating the idea that if we say we are going to make such a donation, we have to stick to our word.
 - ii) By the way, our local church is not under any obligation to sell it back to us for a 20% profit. The specific's applied to the land of Israel. There is no "year of Jubilee" for the United States or any other modern country. This was discussed back in the lesson on Chapter 25. That was a specific issue just for ancient Israel. My point is many of the "specifics" of Leviticus 27 no longer apply.
 - iii) What does still apply is the principal that God wants us to be honest in our dealings and fulfill our commitments.
 - iv) What if I make a commitment and I want to back out of it? Talk to the person to whom you made the commitment. Maybe there is a way of restitution. God want us to be "men and women of our word" even if it means we have to financially suffer for such commitments. Remember, if people can't trust us with our "vows", how are they ever going to trust us when we tell them about God?
15. Verse 22: "If a man dedicates to the LORD a field he has bought, which is not part of his family land,²³ the priest will determine its value up to the Year of Jubilee, and the man must pay its value on that day as something holy to the LORD.²⁴ In the Year of Jubilee the field will revert to the person from whom he bought it, the one whose land it was.²⁵ Every value is to be set according to the sanctuary shekel, twenty gerahs to the shekel.
- a) Oh boy, I get to talk about more real estate deals. ☺
 - b) Here is the key difference between the last paragraph and this paragraph:
 - i) The last paragraph focused on land that was part of one's family heritage.
 - ii) This paragraph focuses on land that is not part of one's family heritage.
 - c) In this paragraph, if one "rents" some land that is not part of their family heritage, they can still donate that land to God, but in the year of jubilee that occurs every 50 years, the land must revert back to its original family owner.
 - d) Let me set this up with an illustration. We "rented" some farm land in ancient Israel. We're doing well financially and no longer need the income from this land. We're in a happy religious mood ☺ and decide that we want to donate that land for God's use. A priest comes around with his calculator and estimates its fair market value based on the number of farm-years left until the next jubilee. The priest then tells us how much we have to pay the priests. Since that land now belongs to the priest, we pay a single, lump-sum rental fee to the priests in exchange for "using their land".
 - e) Again, this system would not work in modern Israel as the land is no longer divided up by tribes. What is important for us is the idea of a commitment to God. Let me try to give a modern example: Suppose one invests in the stock market. Let's say one sets aside a specific stock portfolio and says, "this account belongs to God". God expects us to honor that commitment and then give "His" stock portfolio for His use. It may mean some local church or it may mean some Christian-based charity.
 - f) The application of these verses is that if we are "renting" something that we don't own, we can still give rental item to God, but at the same time, we still have to honor the commitment of our rental agreement with the original owner. We can't get out of any original agreement by saying, "Well I gave what I rented from you to God. I can't give it back to you. Tough luck." ☺

16. Verse 26: " `No one, however, may dedicate the firstborn of an animal, since the firstborn already belongs to the LORD; whether an ox or a sheep, it is the LORD's. ²⁷ If it is one of the unclean animals, he may buy it back at its set value, adding a fifth of the value to it. If he does not redeem it, it is to be sold at its set value.
- a) In the Book of Exodus, a principal was set by God that the firstborn of every family already belongs to God. When the Passover occurred, the first born children of all the Egyptians were killed. The Israelites were spared by putting lamb's blood on the door. God said in effect, "The first born already belong to me as I spared them". The Israelite children did not have to be killed, but an innocent animal had to be killed as a "substitute" for their life. It is yet another example of an "innocent" sacrifice paying the price for our sins. (Hint! Hint! ☺)
 - b) Which leads us back here to Leviticus: God is saying in effect, "You can't donate to Me what already belongs to Me in the first place". God desires the first of our earnings to go to Him. If one is a sheep herder, the first baby to come out gets sacrificed to God. It is a way of saying how we are dependant upon God for providing for our future.
 - c) For the Israelite, the first born already belongs to God. They can't "give it again" in an oath what already belongs to God. For the Christian, if we have already decided to donate something to God, it now belongs to Him. We can't give it an oath a second time.
 - d) Verse 27 has another loophole. Let's say the "firstborn" is an unclean animal. Again, certain types of animals were declared "unclean". This includes say donkeys and camels. One can still own and raise those animals. The firstborn of those animals still belongs to God. To be "unclean" simply means it can't be eaten or sacrificed on God's altar.
 - i) Verse 27 says a person has the right to buy that firstborn "unclean" animal back, but has to pay a 20% penalty over and above its appraised value.
 - e) Let me take a quick side diversion here for an "out-there" theory:
 - i) People who study numbers in the bible associate the number "five" with God's grace. It's a complicated to explain, but for some reason, whenever the number five appears, one should look for evidence of God's grace.
 - ii) One of the terms used over and over again in this chapter is that if one wishes to buy back what one has committed, one "adds a fifth" to its value. I've been using 20% in this lesson to say the same thing.
 - iii) One can ponder the use of the number "five" here with the right to redeem what has been given to God. The association is we are somehow going back on our commitment to God, but "through His grace", it is not sinful.
 - iv) In other words, in most of these vow-commitments, it is not a sin to go back on the vow if we pay the one-fifth-more (20%) penalty. My point here is that it is a picture of God's grace that He allows us to go back on our commitments.
 - v) Let me put it this way: Nowhere in the text does it ever say, "I God can go back on My word. Don't worry, I'll make it up to you and add 20% for your trouble." ☺ Only us-humans have the ability to get out of our commitments to God (in most cases) and God's grace is still there to show His love for us even though we desire to back out of our commitment.
17. Verse 28: " `But nothing that a man owns and devotes to the LORD--whether man or animal or family land--may be sold or redeemed; everything so devoted is most holy to the LORD.
- a) The English translation of Verse 28 does not come out real clear here. The idea is if that God specifically says something belongs to Him, we as people can no longer touch it. We cannot dedicate something to God that already belongs to Him in the first place.
 - i) For example, some land in ancient Israel was already dedicated for the priests. We cannot rent that land and then dedicate to God. It already belongs to Him.
 - ii) Another example is the firstborn animals. They already belong to God.

18. Verse 29: " `No person devoted to destruction may be ransomed; he must be put to death.
- a) Let's say someone is found guilty of a capital crime. That person is then given the death penalty. That person cannot get out of the death penalty by giving himself or herself to God in exchange for their lives. In other words, you can't use these vow-rules as a loophole to get out of one's death-sentence.
19. Verse 30: " `A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the LORD; it is holy to the LORD. ³¹ If a man redeems any of his tithe, he must add a fifth of the value to it. ³² The entire tithe of the herd and flock--every tenth animal that passes under the shepherd's rod--will be holy to the LORD. ³³ He must not pick out the good from the bad or make any substitution. If he does make a substitution, both the animal and its substitute become holy and cannot be redeemed.' "
- a) We now come to the topic of "tithes". The word means one-tenth. The idea is that ten percent of one's income belongs to God. If one is an employee, it is ten percent of the paycheck. If one is self-employed, it is ten percent of the profit.
 - b) God is saying here that no less than ten percent is already required of all Israelites. Therefore, they cannot dedicate any part of that ten percent as a vow.
 - c) If one is a sheep herder, how does one give ten percent? The answer is in Verse 32. It says that every 10th animal is given to God as the tithe. Verse 33 goes on to say in effect that a sheep herder cannot pick and choose which animal is "number 10". The sheep herder cannot substitute a bad animal as part of that requirement.
 - d) The idea of tithing is to trust God for future provision. It is not that God needs our income. The idea is to say, "I'm trusting You for my future provision. In order to put my money where my mouth is (i.e., the title of this lesson!), I'm giving you ten percent of my income to show I'm trusting You to provide for my future."
 - e) Time again for a quick discussion of Christians and tithing: The New Testament does not require Christians to tithe one's income. That would put us "under the law". If one is required to keep that portion of the law, then one has to keep all of the law. (See James 2:10). Throughout the New Testament, Christians are told they should give part of their income, but no amount is specified (See 2nd Corinthians 9:7). The only time Jesus mentions tithing is when he is picking on some Pharisee's for tithing their income but ignoring other aspects of the law. (See Matthew 23:23).
 - i) With that said, many Christians do tithe their income. I have yet to see one Christian go bankrupt or even become penniless because they "out-gave God". God will not be a debtor to any human being.
 - ii) My point is if a Christian voluntarily decides to tithe their income, God expects them to honor that vow and God will bless that commitment. It is not a requirement but I have watched many lives become blessed by those that do.
 - iii) Where do we give? There are lots of wonderful Christian-based charity and ministry organizations. I do believe one should give primarily to one's own church, but one should also support other ministries that either blesses their lives or ministries that one sees are "bearing good fruit".
 - iv) How a Christian should give their money a little like playing the stock market: One looks for stocks that have a good return on investment. The same applies to picking ministries to support. One looks for a good return on "God's investment".
20. Verse 34: These are the commands the LORD gave Moses on Mount Sinai for the Israelites.
- a) This is the last verse of Leviticus. This verse is God saying, "That's a wrap folks. There are no other commands to obey in regards to my relationship with You." In all fairness, the book of Numbers and Deuteronomy come after Leviticus. There are some additional laws in those books. The purpose of Leviticus is about how to be "holy" before God. Verse 34 is saying on that specific topic, all of laws are covered in this book.

21. OK, time to step back and look at the big picture:
- a) This last chapter of Leviticus comes after all the do's and don'ts of Leviticus.
 - b) This last chapter of Leviticus comes after God's promises of blessings for obedience and promises of curses for disobedience.
 - c) The purpose of Chapter 27, also known as, "The Voluntary Vow Chapter" is to discuss what happens when people want to go over and above what God requires of us on the topic of pleasing God. It is our ego's saying, "OK God, I have read all of your requirements for my life and I agree to keep them. What if I want to go over and above Your requirements in order to please You? The answer is Chapter 27.
 - i) God is saying in effect, "If you want to go over and above what is required of you (in your relationship with Me) then you still have to play by My rules. In such cases, here is what you can do and here is what you cannot do.
 - ii) In other words, God is in charge of determining what we have to do to please Him. We have to approach God on His terms and not our terms. That includes situations where we go over and above what is required of Him.
22. OK, John you've convinced me not to make any vows the rest of the day. ☺ What else should I get out of this chapter?
- a) The reason God put this chapter last is because He knows our nature. Our egos want to please Him and we want to "strike a deal" every so often. This especially happens when things go wrong in our life. When we do go over and above what God desires for us, that is when God says in effect, "OK, I'll hold you to that."
 - b) Again, this chapter neither condones nor condemns these vows. It just says in effect that if you're going to make them, God is going to hold us to those vows.
23. Let's get back to the title of this lesson: "Put Your Money Where Your Mouth Is".
- a) This is a classical American expression about obedience. I find it is one of the best clichés to describe one's commitment as a Christian. It is easy to say "I believe in Jesus". It is another to actually make the effort to do what Jesus requires of us.
 - b) There was an old bumper sticker that used to say, "Honk if you love Jesus". A better bumper sticker then came out that read, "Real men tithe for Jesus, any idiot can honk".
 - i) That last bumper sticker says it all. The idea is not so much about actually tithing, but about making the physical effort to show one's faith in God.
 - ii) One is saved only by one's faith in God. If one truly has such faith, one is going to act on it. One is going to "Put their money where their mouth is" so to speak.
 - c) That is why this last chapter in Leviticus is an ideal way to end the book.
 - i) It is God saying in effect, "You want to commit your life to Me? Great. I won't accept just lip service. I expect you to put your money where your mouth is when you make such vows. I expect you to act in ways that stem from your vows".
 - ii) That is why Chapter 27 is so full of money issues and valuations. It is easy to say "I commit this to God". When it actually affects the pocketbook, this separates those who truly want to commit themselves to God from those who just want to verbally make the statement.
24. Finally, let's put this chapter in context of all of Leviticus:
- a) The main purpose of Leviticus is to teach us what God expects of us in order to have a relationship with Him. The key word is "holy". That means to fully dedicate oneself to pleasing God in all that we do. That includes the daily mundane tasks of life as well as our "church behavior". The idea is not that we have to concentrate on God every moment of one's life, but one has to be aware of one's behavior and realize that we are accountable to God for all that we do. One must act in ways that are pleasing to God.
 - b) Much of Leviticus does not apply today. For example, we don't sacrifice animals anymore for the forgiveness of sins or to show our commitment to God. We as Christians understand that Jesus paid the price for sins for us.

- c) What does not change is God's attitude toward sin and attitude toward holiness. What God considers sinful in the Old Testament, He still considers sinful in the New Testament.
 - d) In summary, when we as Christians study Leviticus, one has to see how "seriously" God takes sin and see how much effort is needed to deal with such sin. Further, we are to see that God demands obedience in order to have a relationship with Him. In one cliché sentence, God asks us "To put our money where our mouth is". It is one thing to say one believes in Jesus. It is another to make an effort to dedicate our lives to Him.
 - e) At the same time, we are to understand the principals behind these laws and understand what God considers sinful. The New Testament is our guide to understand how Christians are to live. I always say that doing God's will for our lives is essentially praying for His will to be done, studying the whole bible to understand what is required of us, then go live our lives. God then "manipulates" our lives as to do His will, whether we realize it or not. If we actually "put our money where our mouth is" when it comes to obedience, if we pray for God's will to be done, if we study God's word to understand what God requires of us, then we can't help but do God's will in our lives.
25. With that said, thank you for being with me through this study in Leviticus. I hope it has enriched your life as much as mine. On the next page is a list of sources I have used for these lessons. Leviticus is probably one of the toughest books of the bible to get through. If you can handle Leviticus, you can handle the rest of the bible. ☺
- a) Leviticus is also the only book that focuses on God's holiness. If I had to pick the most important sentence in Leviticus, it would be God saying, "Be Holy, for I am holy". (Leviticus 11:44-45). The idea is that we are to dedicate our lives completely to serving God. The idea of holiness has to do with "separation". God is separate from humanity because He is perfect and therefore "above" us in nature. That is describing God's holiness. God then says, "If we want to be "perfect" like Him, we must accept His perfect sacrifice for sin and then live a life fully pleasing to Him in all that we do.
 - b) Again, our holiness is not about obeying every rule in Leviticus. Many of the laws are outdated. What is to be understood are the principals behind the laws and God's attitude toward sin. If there is one thing to get out of Leviticus, it is just how seriously God takes sin and how much trouble is necessary to alleviate the sin issue. If anything, Leviticus should make us all the more grateful for Jesus' payment on the cross.
26. Let's Pray: Father, our desire is to live holy lives. That means to live a life that is fully pleasing to You in all that we do. Give us discernment every day in terms of what that means for us and what you require of us, both as individuals and as part of a local church or the Christian body as a whole. Help us to understand what You expect of us and give us discernment as we contemplate Your word. Finally, give us the boldness to actually apply Your word to our lives. Help us to step out in faith for what You desire for us every day. Help us to abide close to You so that through Your power, we can live a holy life. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.

Supplement: Bibliography

"If I have seen further, it is because I have stood on the shoulders of giants." (Isaac Newton)

Without prayer and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, all these commentaries are useless. My prayer as I prepare these lessons was for God to show me the things He wanted *me* to learn, and second, the lessons He wanted me to pass on in my writings. I have quoted many sources throughout these lessons. If any of these writers appeal to you, I invite you to read or listen to further commentaries as listed below. I have also quoted other sources not listed, and those names are usually listed in the lessons. These other authors were usually quoted from the materials listed below and taken from those sources.

First and foremost, the greatest commentary on the Bible is the Bible itself. Here are the bible versions I use in this study. I mostly quote The New International Version (NIV), Copyright 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society; The New King James Version (NKJV). Copyright © 1979, 1980, 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.; The King James Version (KJV) and The Living Bible (TLB) Copyright © 1971, 1986 by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Wheaton, IL 60189. All the bible text is taken from Parsons Software: Electronic Edition STEP Files Copyright © 1999, Parsons Technology, Inc., all rights reserved and from Zondervan Reference Software (32-bit edition) Version 2.6, Copyright © 1989-1998 The Zondervan Corporation.

Here are the commentaries I have referenced over the past lessons. The specific commentaries on Leviticus are listed first, and then the bible-wide commentaries. They are listed in alphabetical order by author. The reference to "audio" commentary means the information was gathered via the MP3® Format, unless otherwise stated. The PDF® reference means it is written text in Adobe PDF format.

1. Commentary on Leviticus Jon Courson. It is in book form from Harvest House Publishing. It is also available in MP3® format at <http://joncourson.com>
2. Commentary on Leviticus by Bob Davies. They are available in MP3® format at http://www.northcountrychapel.com/audio_studies/index.php
3. Commentary on Leviticus by David Guzik. It is available for free in HTML text format. The web address is http://www.enduringword.com/library_commentaries.html.
4. Commentary on Leviticus by Chuck Missler, available in MP3® format at K-House Ministries 1-800-KHOUSE1. The web address is <http://www.khouse.org>.
5. Holiness to the Lord: A Guide to the Exposition of the Book of Leviticus by Allen P. Ross, Published by Baker Academics (March 01, 2006). ISBN-10: 0801031346
6. Commentary on Leviticus by Ray Stedman, They are available in MP3® and PDF® format. The web address is <http://www.raystedman.org/leviticus/index.html>.
7. Commentary on the Old Testament, Vol. 1: First Five Books of Moses By C.F. Keil & F. Delitzsch; Accessed electronically via QuickVerse® Software, from Parsons Software: Electronic Edition STEP Files Copyright © 1999, Parsons Technology, Inc., all rights reserved. Omaha, Nebraska
8. The MacArthur Study Bible with commentary by John MacArthur Nelson Bibles (1997) ISBN: 0849912229
9. The Life Application Bible, Zondervan Publishing: www.zondervanbibles.com/0310919770.htm
10. The Expositor's Bible Encyclopedia, Zondervan Publications, (via CD-ROM 1998 release). This is a multi-volume encyclopedia with notes on every verse of the Bible. (It is available at Christian bookstores.) Paperback books are published on individual Bible books from this source.
11. When Critics Ask: A Popular Handbook on Bible Difficulties -- Norman L. Geisler, Thomas Howe; Baker Book House 1999 (Available at Christian Bookstores.)
12. I also refer to Greg Koukl's apologetic ministry which is Stand to Reason at www.str.org