

# Numbers 6

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[ 0 : 00 ] When I was growing up, one of my favorite programs was Record Breakers.

Now, those of you of my generation will know what I'm talking about, or I don't know if they pass it on Dave TV or Challenge or one of these channels, they're probably showing repeats of Record Breakers, I don't know.

But those of you who do know what I'm talking about will remember Roy Castle, who was the presenter of that program, very enthusiastic and effervescent and multi-talented.

And Castle also sang the theme song of the program, which you'll be delighted to know I'm not going to sing now. But one of the lines went along something like this, if you want to be a record breaker, dedication is what you need.

Dedication is what you need if you want to be a record breaker. And that was repeated several times, as I recall. Anyway, and it is, of course, a reality. It's remarkable what can be achieved by a man, a woman, a child dedicated to a cause.

[ 1 : 08 ] And examples of that abound. Those who are men and women of faith, believers, and also those of other faiths or no faiths, but who are dedicated to a particular cause, whatever that might be.

And you stand back often and wonder at what they're able to achieve. And dedication can help overcome multiple limitations that there might be, that we might have.

Unpromising circumstances can, at least in significant measure, be overcome when there is dedication in the one who is doing whatever they're doing.

But when we do think of our own Christian lives and the matter of Christian discipleship, we think of the life and health and growth of the church.

Dedication is also a precious commodity or Christian trait. We are called, each and every one of us, to a life dedicated to God.

[ 2 : 10 ] And such a life is presented to us in the Bible as, on the one hand, a tough life. The Bible is not afraid to make it very clear, a very honest presentation of the difficulties, the hardships that can often be associated with a serious Christian life.

But that's also balanced, if you wish, by a recognition that such a life is a full life and a satisfying life. We think of Jesus and those very impressive words, very exciting words.

I've come to bring you life, to give you life, and life in all its fullness. The Christian life lived in a dedicated manner is a satisfying life.

It's a blessed life. And dedication and blessing really belong together. They're two sides of the same coin. And it's not fortuitous that the priestly blessing recorded at the end of chapter 6 of Numbers that we were thinking about this morning immediately follows the description of the Nazarite vow, a vow of separation or dedication to God.

Blessing and dedication feed off each other, though the starting point, without question, is God's blessing.

[ 3 : 31 ] Blessing is a spur to dedication, and dedication, in turn, brings further blessing. Or perhaps we could qualify that, not qualify that, but develop that a little by saying that not perhaps just further blessing, though that's true, but also the capacity to appreciate and enjoy God's blessing.

The more dedicated we are to God, the more we value and appreciate the blessings we receive from Him. So even if they're not greater in quantity, our appreciation of them, our capacity to value them and appreciate them increases and deepens the more dedicated we are to the one who is blessing us.

Well, the Nazarite vow that we've read about, and I've made reference to this already, you know, the language does seem so foreign, so alien, the details.

We are prone to read this and say, well, really, what is there there for us that's helpful or meaningful or relevant? But when we go beyond maybe the details and try and get to the root of the matter, the vow was all about dedication, about dedication to God.

The word from which this word Nazarite is derived, the word Nazar, means separate. So in the very word that describes the vow, we have this idea, this concept of separation or dedication.

[ 5 : 01 ] This was a vow of separation. And I think when we speak about separation, even that word is a little bit or has negative connotations, you know, to be separate from others, from the world, is that not escapism?

But this separation had two aspects to it. Perhaps the most obvious one when we think of the word separation is that we're separate from. And then we could have a list of what those things are that we're separate from.

And we're going to see that in the vow there were very specific matters that the one who took the vow had to be separate from. But fundamentally, it's not about being separate from anything.

It's about being separated to or for the Lord. The very beginning of the chapter in verses 1 and 2, we read, The Lord said to Moses, Speak to the Israelites and say to them, If a man or woman wants to make a special vow, a vow of separation to the Lord.

It then goes on to say he mustn't do this and he mustn't touch this and all this complicated stuff. But at heart, this is about a believer whose desire is to be dedicated to God in a very special way.

[ 6 : 17 ] So that's what it's about. And, you know, I've already, I don't want to repeat myself in saying, well, we've read some of the stuff and we think, well, what's that got to do with me?

But I think what we certainly can do, or I hope we can do this evening, is in the midst of all the details, identify some abiding principles regarding this matter of dedication to God.

And the passage, I hope we'll discover, can both teach us about living lives that are dedicated to God, and also the passage will serve to point us to Jesus as the dedicated one.

Let's call Jesus the dedicated one in the context of this chapter. We'll come to that. There's a certain football manager who's the special one. Well, forget about the special one. We're going to be thinking about, or we're going to see how this passage points us to who we could call the dedicated one.

So there's lessons for our own lives of dedication to God, practical, I hope, lessons, but also in parallel, the passage pointing us to the one we could call the dedicated one.

[ 7 : 27 ] So let's proceed. And if it's your desire, let me just say this one further thing before we launch into this. If it's your desire to live a life dedicated to your God and Savior, to live a life that brings glory to God, then I am sure there is material here that will be helpful to you.

And I certainly hope that that is your desire, as I hope that is mine also. Let's divide what we find in the passage under the following headings. The first thing we want to talk about is the desire to be dedicated.

Just briefly touch on that, a certain parallel, not just fortuitous, with what we were looking at this morning about God's desire to bless. Well, we're going to begin here by thinking about the desire to be dedicated.

But then we're going to move on to what we're calling the nature and manner of dedication in the matter of this vow and what we can draw from that. But then we're going to identify what is very prominently identified in this chapter, what we're calling the problem with dedication.

And then the next thing we're going to look at is the provision of God for vow breakers. This is about taking a vow. But enmeshed in the description of the vow, there is already contemplated and provision made for breaking the vow.

[ 8 : 54 ] It may sound very pessimistic to, even in the instructions about the vow, say, well, this is what you're going to do when you break it. But we'll find that that's what we have, and we'll see why that is. And then finally, drawing things, I hope, to a practical conclusion.

You and me and the dedicated one who is pointed to in this chapter. So, the desire to be dedicated. An important and indeed prominent aspect of this particular vow was that it was a voluntary vow open to any Israelite, man or woman.

Any member of the family of God, of God's people, was able, had the opportunity to take this vow. And it was an entirely voluntary vow.

That's made very clear there in the introduction or the beginning of the chapter. The Lord said to Moses, speak to the Israelites, to the children of Israel, and say to them, if a man or woman wants

to make a special vow.

Nobody was obliged to do this. There was no compulsion. Nobody was kind of, well, expected to do it. No, if you wanted to do it, you could do it. If you chose not to do it, that was okay as well.

[10:09] So, implicit in that is this aspect of desire. You would only do it if you wanted to do it. There was this desire on the part that took this vow to dedicate themselves, in this case, for a particular period to God.

Now, just to complicate things a little bit, and we're not going to go into this, but when we have examples in the Scripture of those who took the vow, or who were subject to the vow in some way, the most prominent examples would be Samson and Samuel.

They were, I guess, involved in this, not on their own regard, but from their parents. So, from birth, they were subject to this vow, and that seems to be somewhat at odds with the description we have here in chapter 6.

But let's just leave that to one side. The core teaching here is about something that is voluntary, that a man or woman of their own free will decides to do, and that's certainly what we're focusing on at this point.

And notice that this opportunity for an ordinary member of God's people to separate themselves to God was an opportunity available, even though God had established for that period in His dealings with His people a particular priestly caste who had particular responsibilities in the matter of the spiritual care of the people.

[11:40] And there were these men who were dedicated, set aside, sanctified in a particular and special way to God. But even though these men existed, anybody else, man or woman, who wished to dedicate themselves to God could do so.

Now, the question really is, and we've really answered it already, but why would an Israelite do this if there was no compulsion to do so? If this was entirely voluntary, why would somebody do it? Well, the answer is really quite straightforward, because they wanted to.

It was their desire to separate or dedicate themselves to God, which rather leads on to the next question. Well, why? Why might that be? Why might there be this desire?

Well, the passage itself doesn't identify reasons, but the vow would ordinarily be taken for one of two reasons. We draw this out from other material that would give us some hints in this regard.

And the two reasons ordinarily that would lie behind an Israelite taking this vow would be thanksgiving. So, if there was a particular matter for which they wished to demonstrate in a very concrete way their thanksgiving to God, well, this would be one way of doing so, by taking this vow for a period of time.

[12:55] Another reason that might provoke somebody to take this vow would be if they were seeking God's blessing for a particular undertaking. Maybe on behalf of somebody who they were concerned for or cared about, taking this vow would give this opportunity to dedicate themselves to God, committed to Him, and prayer to Him in regard to that matter.

The passage doesn't give us that, but these are the reasons which I think you might identify as reasons for taking the vow. But I think of those two, thanksgiving, I think we can safely say, would have been the more prominent of the two.

Now, times have changed, but the fundamentals remain in this matter of dedication. Dedication is conceived in desire. Today, that is true for us as Christians.

Commitment flows from conviction. Holiness is the fruit of wholehearted gratitude. If you don't want to be holy, you never will be holy. That is certainly true.

If there isn't the desire to be holy, you won't be holy. If you don't desire God, you'll never be dedicated to God. I think that is something we can state with significant confidence.

[14:10] That's just the way it is. And even before we move on, or as we move on to the next point that we want to touch on, let's just pause, and I would invite you to pause, and just have this question, even if you don't answer it right now, have it in your mind, this huge question for each and every one of us.

What is it that you most desire? What is it that you most desire? If what you most desire is to please God, and to be useful in God's service, and to live a life that is pleasing to Him, then that will be the driver to being dedicated to Him.

But if your desire is for something else, then that will be what will occupy your time, and your attention, and your resources. And you can probably look at yourself, and analyze yourself, and

come to the conclusion that that's the way it is.

Your desire, your greatest desire, will drive the life you live, and how you live it. So that's the first thing I want to just notice, that we can draw from this vow. Foreign and alien, though it may seem to us, it's born of the desire of a believer to be dedicated to God.

Let's move on and think a little bit about the nature and manner of dedication to God. So two things there, the nature of dedication, and the manner of dedication. Now, all I want to say about the nature of dedication, is to highlight that it is God who determines what dedication to God involves or looks like.

[15:43] God is the one who says, this is the way in which you can be dedicated to me. To just think of the alternative, it wasn't the case that a zealous Israelite would sit down and ponder on the matter and think to himself, well, what special way can I come up with to show God how grateful I am?

You know, God has blessed me in this way, whatever it is, and I want to show him how grateful I am. Well, what could I do? And get their pad out and start writing out, I could do this or I could do that. No, that wasn't the task for the Israelite.

God said, if you want to show you're dedicated to me, well, this is the way you can do it. God was the one who determined the nature of dedication to himself, certainly in the matter of this particular avenue or opportunity of the vow.

God determined how any of his people could give voluntary expression to their love and gratitude. Now, even that idea kind of grates somewhat with us in a society that is very individualistic in many ways.

We all want to do our own thing and we can be so, I would say, polluted by that way of thinking that it's my life and I'll do things my own way that even in the matter of service to God, we have that idea, well, I'll decide how I will give expression to my loyalty and my love for God.

[17:13] I'll be the one who will come up with the way to do that. But let me suggest that that would be a mistake. God is the one who determines even the very nature of dedication to himself, what that looks like and what that involves.

He did it certainly in the matter of this vow, but I think we can draw from that that he does so more generally throughout the world. In regard to the nature, but also thinking about the manner, the manner of dedication.

And here we just want to think about this vow and what this vow involved. And I think we can identify three broad characteristics of this vow that incorporate abiding principles even for today. Even if this isn't a vow that we are invited to take or if it would be appropriate for us to take, it is from another age in terms of God's redemptive purposes.

Nonetheless, identify three principles. I don't think this will, I hope it doesn't involve us getting into too much detail, just drawing out the big picture. The three principles I think we can say about the manner of dedication is that first of all, it was two-sided, it was all or nothing, and then the third thing I'm going to say, and I apologize for not finding a better word, but the third thing, and I'll explain what I mean by this in a moment, not that I'm suggesting you don't know, but punctilious.

[18:39] This, I must have, there must have been a better word than that, but anyway, we'll come to it. These are three aspects regarding the manner of dedication in terms of the big picture.

Let's just look at each in turn very briefly. First of all, it was two-sided. Now, we've already touched on that, we mentioned it at the beginning, and what I mean by that is that it involved separation from, and it involved separation or dedication to.

Now, the from aspect appears more prominent because the whole chapter really, or much of the chapters, is occupied with describing those things that the Nazarite had to abstain from.

So, it's very prominent in terms of the amount of ink that is spilt to describe it. But though it takes up more time and more space, we ought not to make the mistake that that's the most significant.

The most significant is what I mentioned at the beginning, is being dedicated to God, but it did involve being separated from certain things. What were these things that the vow maker or taker had to be separated from?

[19:44] Well, basically, there were three things. They had to be separate from, they had to abstain from wine and everything related to the grape. They had to abstain also from cutting his or her hair.

Having first shaved their hair, they then had to allow it to grow for the period, the duration, of the vow. And the third thing that they had to be separate from was from death and any manifestation of death, any physical contact with one who had died and even mourning for those who had died. We're not actually told in the chapter explicitly the reasons for these particular abstentions. We can come up with some plausible suggestions for each of them. The question of wine would seem simple enough.

Wine is so often associated with excess and drunkenness and so it seems reasonable that that might be the reason why this was one thing that the vow taker should abstain from. It doesn't mean that when they weren't under the vow that they could freely go and get drunk, but it's associated with that and so that might explain why this was what you were to abstain from. [ 20 : 56 ] In terms of death, I think there, death, as we know, is not natural. It's not part of God's natural created order.

It is the wages of sin. It's associated with sin, even natural death in a fundamental way is associated with sin. And so again, you can understand why for this period of the vow, this might be the reason why the vow taker had to abstain from that which represented sin in some fashion.

The prohibition for cutting one's hair, it's less obvious why that would have been established. Possibly, it was simply to serve as a visible reminder both to the one taking the vow and indeed to others that the vow had been taken.

And so, you know, every day, I'm not saying they looked in mirrors, but even as he felt his head, he was reminded, you know, this is the vow that I have taken. Possibly, that's what's going on there. But much more importantly, the vow involved not separation only from, but separation to the Lord, to his worship, to the study of his word, to prayer, to a service in his name.

[ 22 : 09 ] But note that this did not involve physical separation from others or from normal daily life. It was not a vow of solitude or separation in that sense.

We've mentioned Samson and Samuel. We've mentioned them in how they differ somewhat to what's described here. But in terms of the example of them as those who did, who were under this Nazarite vow, in their case, a lifelong vow, they in no way were separate from normal life, even though they were under this vow.

Perhaps in Samson's case, he would have done well to have been a little bit more separate, but that's another matter. So they were separate to the Lord.

So there was this two-sided aspect to it, from, but more significantly to. The other thing, I think we can draw out from it, that there was an all or nothing flavor to this vow. While it was for a period, it was time limited, with the exception that we've already noticed of others who we're told of in the Bible, it did require total commitment during that period.

Even if we notice the language that we find repeated, even just at the beginning of the chapter, in verse 4, we read, as long as he is a Nazarite, in verse 5, during the entire period of his vow, in verse 6, throughout the period of his separation.

[ 23 : 33 ] Dedication to God is presented as a full-time endeavor. It's not a part-time hobby. Being a Christian isn't a hobby. It's not a leisure activity.

Serving God is not the answer to the question, what do you do in your spare time? Oh, well, I like to serve God. I like to help out at the church. You know, that's what I like to do in my spare time. What we can draw out from this chapter is that that's not what being dedicated to God ought to look like. It's all or nothing. And the third thing that we can draw out as a kind of abiding principle concerning the manner of dedication to God is, and this is the word I've chosen for want of a better one, punctilious.

And the reason I use that word is that I hope it's the one that captures what I'm trying to say. Punctilious has to do with detail. It's about doing something, whatever it is, in a meticulous and scrupulous manner.

Everything has to be just so. And the Nazarite vow was very much like that. We're not going to go and give all the examples, though there are so many of them in the chapter, but just think of the prohibition of wine as one example.

[ 24 : 45 ] We've already said, well, okay, that makes sense. Don't drink wine. The danger of excess and losing self-control, well, we can understand that. But we're told that it wasn't just about abstaining from alcohol.

We're told he must not eat anything that comes from the grapevine, not even the seeds or skin. You might say, well, that's a bit strict, that's a bit extreme, that's a bit fanatical, but I think what it's getting across is that dedication to God ought to be serious.

It is about details. It is about doing that which God requires of us just so. In the matter of separation from the dead, the rules are, you might say, equally or even more stringent.

They might sound almost harsh to us. In verse 7, even if his own father or mother or brother or sister dies, he must not make himself ceremonially unclean on account of them.

How painful that must have been perhaps for somebody who had taken this vow and then, in an unexpected way, somebody near and dear to them dies. Well, because of the vow, they had to remain separate from the one who had died and indeed from this mourning that would have accompanied, quite rightly, the death.

[ 25 : 57 ] Very strict, you might say. Very important for the one who had taken the vow to be careful to do everything just as God had commanded.

I think that does speak to us and there's an abiding principle for us in terms of our dedication to God. It involves being separate from that which is not pleasing to Him, but much more importantly, being dedicated to Him.

It is all or nothing. It's not a part-time endeavor. It's not a hobby. It is something we need to be very careful about, carefully following all that He would have us do. But that draws us on to the next thing that we'll touch on briefly and that is the problem with dedication.

Well, what is the problem? How can there be a problem with dedication? Well, the problem is really a very fundamental one and it's this, that dedication, certainly in the manner that was required, is just not doable.

You know, we can't do it. That is the big problem. Even when there is the desire, we fall short. And of course, God knew that that would happen and He contemplates our inability to be wholly dedicated in the very stipulations of the vow.

[ 27 : 10 ] He does so in two ways. In the first way, He anticipates an involuntary breach of the vow. In verses 9 to 12, we won't read them, but we've read the chapter, that the scenario is contemplated when somebody in an involuntary way has contact with one who has died.

So, you know, there was no ill intent. It was involuntary. You would say, well, they had, there was no fault on the part of the vow taker. It was something that just happened in a fortuitous way, wholly involuntary.

However, nonetheless, the vow had been breached. And even that involuntary breach required the vow taker to start again. Really, you know, it's a case of, the boys in the house last night, we were playing Monopoly, and this is a case of, go back to jail, do not pass go, and do not collect 200.

The vow's been broken. If you want to take this vow, you've got to start again. You've got to go back to the start. All the days that you'd kept your vow, they count for nothing. You've got to go right back to the beginning and start again.

Even an involuntary breach involved or required the vow taker to start from the beginning again. So that's in one way that the problem is contemplated by God.

[ 28 : 30 ] But also, a failure to perfectly keep the vow is simply assumed by God in the provisions for the vow. From verses 13 to 20, we have the explanation of how you end the vow.

But note particularly the need, on every occasion when a vow taker came to the end of the period that he had committed to, on every occasion there was a need for a sin offering at the very end of the process.

There's a reference to other offerings, but for reasons of time we'll limit ourselves to the sin offering. Now, why was there a need for a sin offering? If the vow taker had reached the end of the period promised, in verse 13, now this is the law for the Nazarite when the period of his separation is over. So if he's reached the end of the period, then presumably it's because he kept the vow. We've already seen that if he broke it in the midst of the vow, he had to go back to the beginning and start again.

But this is somebody who's reached the end. It's somebody who, in the eyes of anybody observing, would have said, no, this is somebody who's kept the vow. They've abstained from wine and anything to do with the vine.

[ 29 : 41 ] There's been no contact with the dead. What's the other one? Yeah, he kept his hair growing throughout the whole period, perfectly kept. And yet, a sin offering is required.

Now, why was that? If he was perfect, why a sin offering? Well, of course, because God knows, as we also know in the light of God's Word, that even when there is outward conformity, the heart is another matter.

There is a distinction between outward compliance and inward purity. There's also a distinction between separation from, that perhaps the vow taker was able to comply with, and separation to, dedication to God.

You might say, well, yes, I've separated from all those things, but in terms of my dedication to God, it fell short of what would have been worthy of God. So, every single vow maker, even those who kept their vow most carefully at the end of the vow, still had to bring a sin offering.

Why? Because they had sinned in the fulfilling of their vow. And, of course, that is the human condition. It was then, and it is now. We fail to match up.

[ 30 : 48 ] We're sinners. We fall short. We don't keep our promises as we ought. That's the problem with dedication. It sounds very grand. Be dedicated to God. And then you say, well, hang on a minute. Yes, that's great, but I'm not very good at that.

I fail. I fall short. Which, thank God, is why we also have in this Nazarite vow the provision of God for vow breakers.

You see, God not only anticipated the problem, He also provided the solution. The solution involved sacrifice. We've already made reference to this sin offering. It's spoken of in verse 11 and also in verse 14.

Other offerings are also mentioned, but we fix our attention on the sin offering. Given that every Nazarite would fall short and would in one way or another sin in the fulfilling of his vow, God graciously provides a means for securing forgiveness, a means whereby another could pay the price for sin, a sacrificial substitute.

You know, one writer expresses it memorably that they, the vow breakers, may borrow from elsewhere what belongs not to themselves. And nothing has changed.

[ 32 : 03 ] We remain sinners in need of another to pay the price of our sin. And in the light, of course, of the coming of Jesus, we know that the one that God has graciously provided for us is his own son.

We know that the sacrifices offered by the Nazarites point forward to another. Indeed, their very efficacy, their value in achieving what they are achieving depends on another.

Which leads us to the final thing we want to say. You and me and the dedicated one. What has this all got to do with you, with me? I hope we've been able to pick up on some abiding principles as we've considered the Nazarite vow.

But in order to fully grasp what it has to do with you and me in the here and now, we need to first identify what it has to do, this Nazarite vow, with the dedicated one.

And we can do this by taking a step back and observing the picture painted in this chapter in our passage as a drama with three main actors. It may not have seemed very dramatic in the reading of the chapter, but just use your imagination.

[ 33 : 13 ] Imagine this is a drama and there are three main actors. Who are the three main actors? Well, there's God, the Lord, the one to whom the Israelite wishes to be dedicated.

There is the dedicated one, the vow taker, the one who takes the vow, the man or the woman. And then the third actor in this drama would be the priest, who at the end, sometimes during the vow, but certainly at the end, had to be involved in offering the sin offering on behalf of the vow maker and breaker as it happens.

Three actors in this drama and three actors who each and every one point to another. Each and every one point to the Messiah.

Each and every one point to our great God and Savior Jesus Christ. He is the Lord of Lords. He is the ultimate dedicated one who lived a life of perfect dedication and punctilious obedience to his Father.

He is both the priest who offers a sin offering on our behalf and indeed, marvel of marvels, he is the sin offering sacrificed in our place.

[ 34 : 21 ] So these three actors in this seemingly very alien account of something that happened a long, long time ago, each of them in their own way pointing forwards to Jesus.

Well, where do we fit in the light of that reality? Well, think of each of the actors in this drama fulfilled in Christ. We are to give our lives in dedicated service to the Lord Jesus as an expression of

our gratitude for all that he has done and continues to do for us.

And whenever in the Bible we are called to what we might call radical dedication, it's always on the grounds of what God has done for us. Maybe the most dramatic example of that is in Romans chapter 12 and in verse 1, therefore I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, in the light of all that God has done for you in Christ, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, which is your spiritual or reasonable act of worship.

We too are to live dedicated lives to God, but as with the Nazarite, born of our gratitude to God for all that he has done for us in Christ.

But when we think of how the vow taker also pointed to Jesus, we can see Jesus in two ways, both as our vow keeper, the one who kept his vow and was wholly dedicated to the Father in a way that we are not and cannot be given our ingrained sinful nature.

[ 35 : 57 ] So we see him as our vow keeper whose obedience he credits to our account and also as our example in vow keeping. We ought not to lose sight of Jesus as our example also.

He's more than our example, but he is our example as he was dedicated so we too can seek to be like him, dedicated to our Heavenly Father.

But then as we saw how with this third actor in the drama, the priest, well we as believers rest in our great high priest in Jesus and in his perfect and enduring sin offering for us.

So I hope that with this in mind, as we've, I hope, done these two things, taken this passage, perhaps at first reading somewhat unpromising, but I hope we've drawn out two things.

One, abiding principles in this matter of dedication to God and what it looks like and what it involves, but perhaps even more importantly or certainly in parallel, seeing how this chapter points to Jesus, the one we are dedicated to, but the one also who we can describe as the ultimate dedicated one, dedicated to the will of his Father and fulfilling perfectly the will of his Father and also pointing to him as our priest who intercedes for us but who also presented himself as the ultimate and sufficient and perfect sacrifice for sin, for our sin.

[ 37 : 30 ] Well, let's just bow our heads and pray a moment. Heavenly Father, we do thank you for your word. We thank you that it is indeed useful for us in so many ways. We pray that what we've given some thought to this evening might prove useful to each of us in the lives that we live as your people.

Help us to be ever more dedicated to you and we pray that that would be born of our gratitude to you, of our desire to live lives that are useful in your service and of blessing to others.

And all of these things we pray in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, let's sing now as we draw our service to a close. We'll sing from Psalm 80A in Sing Psalms from page 107.

Psalm 80A on page 107, well, the verses we're going to sing are on page 107 from verse 14 through to the end of the psalm. And we'll sing these verses to the tune Love Divine.

Turn to us, O God Almighty, look and see from heaven above. Tend this vine your hand is planted and the Son you raised in love. Psalm 80 from verse 14 to the end.

[ 38 : 42 ] We'll stand to sing. Thank you. Turn to us, O God Almighty, look and see from heaven above.

Tend this vine your hand has planted and the Son you raised in love.

See your vine cut down and wither and its branches burn with fire.

Your rebuke has crossed your people and they perish in your heart.

Let your hand be placed in blessing on the hand of your right hand.

[ 39 : 59 ] O God Almighty, O God Almighty, O God Almighty, O God Almighty, whom alone you cause to stand.

Then we will not wander from you, turning from you to our shame.

strengthen us, strengthen us, revive and heal us, then we'll call upon your name.

Look on us, O God Almighty, let us see your glory bright.

turn us, O God Almighty, turn us, O God Almighty, turn us, O God Almighty, turn us, O God Almighty, come and save us, give us light.

[ 41 : 16 ] Amen. Now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all now and always. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen.