



April 13-14 2013
Numbers 6
“A Modern Nazirite”
Pastor Gary Hamrick

This study brings us to Scripture that deals with a vow Israelites could take, called a Nazirite vow,¹ which was primarily taken to demonstrate that someone was setting themselves apart for God. Pastor Gary’s message includes a look at the historical purpose, practice, and practicality of this type of vow. He also includes three points of application for Christians today: don’t allow anything to intoxicate you, don’t allow anything to contaminate you, and place yourself under the authority of Christ.

Purpose Of A Nazirite

1. This was a voluntary vow of separation, consecration, and dedication to God.
 - a. The vow was not required or demanded by God, nor was it imposed upon someone or expected of anyone; it was a voluntary act of devotion.
 - b. People would take the vow if they wanted to be set apart to God for a special purpose for a specific time, or if he or she was struggling with something and they wanted to “get right” with God.
2. Men and women could take the vow.
 - a. It’s noteworthy that God made a special provision to include women, because at this particular time, men conducted the sacrifices, men gave the offerings, and the census was only taken to count the fighting men.
3. The vow usually had an established period of time, however, there are examples of it being a lifetime vow.
 - a. **Numbers 6:13a** - “... when the period of separation is over.”

¹ In Hebrew, the word Nazarene/Nazareth is netser, which means, branch. The Hebrew word for Nazirite is nazir, meaning, set apart.

- b. There was a specific process that closed out a Nazirite vow that included the priest and certain sacrifices.
- c. The length of time for the vow was up to the individual, and could be set for days, weeks, months, years, or in a few cases, a lifetime.

Practices Of A Nazirite

- 4. Men or women taking this vow were not permitted to drink wine or other fermented drinks, eat grapes or raisins, have no contact or be in close proximity to a dead body, and finally, they were not permitted to cut their hair.
 - a. Wine
 - i. The prohibition against alcohol or anything from a grape vine was to make sure that nothing intoxicating controlled or clouded a person's judgment.
 - ii. The individual under the vow was to be clear-minded and sober toward God.
 - iii. The individual under the vow was to be exclusively under God's control.
 - b. Dead Bodies
 - i. The command to have no contact or be in close proximity to a dead body indicates that the person taking the vow was instructed to not be around anything that would contaminate.
 - ii. **Numbers 19:11-12** - *"Whoever touches the dead body of anyone will be unclean for seven days. He must purify himself with the water on the third day and on the seventh day; then he will be clean. But if he does not purify himself on the third and the seventh days, he will not be clean."*
 - iii. For the Nazirite, this was a way of maintaining a kind of cleanliness of body and soul before God.
 - c. Hair
 - i. Long hair was a visible sign of the vow, and it reminded the person and others, that this individual was separated unto the Lord.
 - ii. **Numbers 6:7b** - *"... the symbol of his separation to God is on his head."*
 - iii. The reason God gave this instruction was because hair is connected to the head, and headship always has the connotation of authority.
 - iv. **Ephesians 5:23** - *"For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior."*
 - v. **1 Corinthians 11:3a** - *"Now I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ..."*
 - vi. Long hair was to be a constant reminder that God was their authority!

vii. Examples of people in the Bible who took a Nazirite vow include:

1. John the Baptist
 - a. **Luke 1:15** - *"... for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from birth."*
2. Paul
 - a. **Acts 18:18** - *"Paul stayed on in Corinth for some time. Then he left the brothers and sailed for Syria, accompanied by Priscilla and Aquila. Before he sailed, he had his hair cut off at Cenchrea because of a vow he had taken."*^{2 3}
3. Samson⁴
 - a. **Judges 13:5** - *"... you will conceive and give birth to a son. No razor may be used on his head, because the boy is to be a Nazirite, set apart to God from birth..."*
 - i. Many have come to believe that Samson was like a superhero who had God-given superhuman strength, however, an equal or greater number of Christians believe that Samson looked more like Barney Fife than Arnold Schwarzenegger.⁵
4. Women
 - a. There are no recorded biblical examples of women who took a Nazirite vow, however, Samson's mother took a vow by the instruction of the angel, because she was going to give birth to a Nazirite.

Practicality Of A Nazirite Today

5. The idea of being separate and consecrated to God is still a good New Testament concept.
6. God never calls us to be separate in the sense of being exclusive or reclusive.

² This ended a vow Paul took while he was in Corinth, perhaps to abstain from the sinful culture that was very prevalent.

³ It's been estimated that there were more than 1,000 prostitutes at the Temple of Aphrodite at any given time!

⁴ Samson was a man of great physical strength, as well as great moral weakness. It should go without saying that he was a very conflicted man. He had a Nazirite vow, but he made terrible compromises and had a weakness for women, that in the end destroyed him. The vow he was under was like any other vow or promise, so it was only as good as the integrity, determination, and commitment of the person making it.

⁵ One reason for this position is that if it were true that he looked the part, then there wouldn't be any reason for people to wonder how and why he had such incredible strength.

- a. Separating does not imply retreating into a monastery so we will be cut off from the rest of mankind.
 - b. There were good intentions behind the Monastic Movement of the 6th through 12th centuries, and separating from society to live in a monastery in order to live a more focused and devout life for God without the distractions of the surrounding culture was a noble idea, however, the problem with this kind of separation is that at the same time, these people cut themselves off from the very people who needed them the most!
 - c. Separation is not meant to be isolation; separation is for the purpose of infiltration, because Christians are supposed to infiltrate the culture and the world, making a difference by letting their voice be heard, and being as successful in whatever they can do so the name of Christ will be lifted up wherever they go.
7. We are called to be like salt, which has a penetrating and flavoring influence in the world.
- a. **Matthew 5:13a** - *"You are the salt of the earth."*
8. We called to be like light, letting our lives shine before others.
- a. **Matthew 5:14-16** - *"You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven."*
9. We are called to be like a fragrance, that spreads the knowledge of God everywhere.
- a. **2 Corinthians 2:14** - *"But thanks to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him."*
10. Since we are called to active, living, and involved people of God, for God, in our world, we need to consider three principles of a modern-day Nazirite vow.
- a. Wine
 - i. We must avoid things that intoxicate, or said another way; we must avoid things that deprive us of a close relationship with the Lord.
 - ii. For some, the issue is alcohol.
 1. **1 Corinthians 6:12a** - *"Everything is permissible for me, but not everything is beneficial."*
 2. The Bible does not forbid alcohol, however, it's also true that drinking alcohol isn't really encouraged either.
 3. The Bible makes it very clear that drunkenness is a sin.

- iii. There are a lot of things in life that are intoxicating, and just because it doesn't cause slurred speech, a staggered walk or fuzzy memories, it can be equally as intoxicating and deprive us of a close relationship with the Lord.
 - 1. Eve was intoxicated by the prospect of being like God, because she believed a lie from Satan.
 - 2. Satan was drunk on pride.
 - 3. Samson was drunk on sex.
 - 4. King Saul was drunk on ambition.
 - 5. Nebuchadnezzar was drunk on power.
 - 6. Judas was drunk on money.
- b. Dead Bodies
 - i. We must avoid the things that contaminate.
 - ii. **2 Corinthians 7:1** - *"Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of a reverence for God."*
 - iii. There are things in life that have the potential to corrupt and contaminate, and it's interesting that this relates to a dead body, which God says don't even go near one!
 - iv. **Numbers 6:6** - *"Throughout the period of his separation to the Lord he must not go near a dead body."*
- c. Hair
 - i. We must keep ourselves under the authority of God.
 - ii. Our life should be a visible sign to others that we obey the Lord, we love the Lord, and we serve the Lord.
 - iii. **Micah 6:8** - *"He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."*

Discussion Questions

1. Review the introduction to the study guide with your group to provide the appropriate background.
2. Read **Numbers 6:1-8** to provide an overview for this study.
3. Allow the people in your group to share any experiences they've had concerning making a vow to God.

4. Have you ever tried to make a vow-like “deal” with God? ⁶
5. Read and discuss the examples Pastor Gary gave of men of the Bible who made a Nazirite vow. (See #4c above)
6. What are some of the things that can be intoxicating to the point that we lose or damage our relationship with the Lord?
 - a. Review and discuss the examples Pastor Gary provided in #10a above.
7. Would you say that you have separated and consecrated yourself unto the Lord?
8. Read and discuss [Matthew 5:13a](#), focusing on ways we can have a preserving and flavoring influence in the world.
9. Read and discuss [Matthew 5:14-16](#), focusing on ways we can let our light shine.
10. Read and discuss [2 Corinthians 2:14](#), focusing on ways we can spread the knowledge of Christ everywhere we go.
11. What are some of the ways you can know you are under the authority of the Lord?
12. Close your time in prayer by asking the Holy Spirit to help each person: purpose in their heart to avoid the things that would damage their relationship with the Lord; (have someone ready to read [Micah 6:8](#)); close your prayer time by “praying” the Scripture to encourage people to live God-honoring lives and be people who make a difference in their world.

* Unless noted, all Scriptures quoted are from the New International Version (NIV 1984).

⁶ For example, many have called out to God and said, “God, if you get me out of this I’ll serve you all the days of my life!”