

Inner Vows

As a child, you began life with a tender, open heart. Yet, as soon as you felt threatened or hurt, you most likely coped by vowing to never again experience that same pain. An inner vow is a solemn promise you make to yourself, usually in a moment of pain, in an effort to soothe your wounded soul. The problem is inner vows have the potential to create a wall between you and God when they contradict the truth of who you are in Christ. Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is to uncover any vows you've made that are blocking you from receiving all the blessings God has for you.

Many inner vows take the form of a statement that begins with "I will never." or "I will always." For example, when a person is feeling rejected, he may vow to "never" again share his true feelings with someone. Or, if a child gets teased for being different, he may vow to "always" follow the crowd in the future. These seemingly harmless vows end up forming directives in the soul that dictate future behavior.

One of the worst consequences of an ungodly inner vow is the protective boundary it forms around the heart. A protective boundary not only keeps hurtful people out, but it also blocks God's Spirit from coming in. In other words, you will never feel God's love in an area of your heart that is walled off by an inner vow. Renouncing fearful vows of self-protection is a critical part of dismantling the wall between you and God.

In this chapter, you will be given an opportunity to share a painful memory of your life with Jesus. The purpose is for you to experience His healing presence as He enters an area of your heart where He was previously blocked. Once inside, Jesus will finally be able to clean out the enemy's lies, and expose any ungodly inner vows you might have made at that time.

If you trace the fruit to the root, you will discover most ungodly inner vows are inspired by the kingdom of darkness. The devil is always looking for ways to fill your heart with fear, and block you from receiving God's peace and joy. One of his favorite tactics is to launch a lie into your belief system that causes you to make a negative inner vow. The devil wants your inner vows to run your life, and keep you imprisoned in unhealthy compulsions and phobias. Thankfully, Jesus came to set you free.

As a Christian, you are to be led by the Holy Spirit, not by the lies of the enemy.

"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."
Romans 8:14

For example, what if in a moment of childhood pain you made an inner vow to never marry? Then, later in life the Lord sends you a wonderful wife or husband in order to bless you. You could easily mistake the resistance you feel to marry as a sign that you shouldn't go forward with the marriage. Instead what you are really experiencing is the internal conflict and confusion caused by an old inner vow lodged in your subconscious.

Once you give your life to Christ, your future belongs to the Lord. **But Jesus cannot be Lord of the areas of your heart that are already programmed by inner vows.** It's interesting to note that the Bible warns that even making long range plans, apart from God's Spirit, is a form of evil boasting.

“... You who say, “Today or tomorrow we shall go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit.” Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. Instead, you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we shall live and also do this or that.” But as it is, you boast in your arrogance; **all such boasting is evil**...” James 4:13-17

What about making good inner vows? Certainly, some vows could never pose a future problem such as “I will always serve God.” But other seemingly good vows could end up opposing God's specific plans for you future. For example, what if you vowed, “I will never be poor.” This appears to be a perfectly harmless goal for yourself. Financial wealth is a blessing and is needed to spread the Gospel and to feed the poor. But what if God wanted you to quit your job, and trust Him for your provision on the mission field for a season? This would create quite an internal conflict in your soul, as it directly contradicts your inner vow to never be poor.

Because vowing can trigger subconscious behavior that is not of God, Jesus warns that it is best just not to vow at all:

“Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not break your oath, but keep the oaths you have made to the Lord. But I tell you, do not swear at all: either by heaven, for it is God's throne; or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black. Simply let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No'; **anything beyond this comes from the evil one**.”
Matthew 5:33-37

Since it is impossible to know the details of your blessed future in Christ, it is wiser to simply decree God's Word over you life, instead of making what you believe to be good vows. For example, you can pick a promise in Scripture and decree it, such as “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” Decreeing God's Word over your life will build your faith and fill your heart with truth. You can never go wrong by coming into agreement with God's Word. But, as the Bible warns, if you start adding vows or oaths to your words, even if they appear good, you could end up inadvertently opposing God's will.

“But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath. But let your “Yes” be Yes,” and your “No,” “No”, lest you fall into judgment.” James 5:12

Once a vow is established in your belief system, such as “I will never marry” you may have to renounce it in order to break its power over your life. In the next section you are going to ask the Holy Spirit to reveal any inner vows programmed into your soul that do not line up with your new identity and destiny in Christ. You will then be given the opportunity to cleanse your belief system, by renouncing those vows and renewing your mind with the truth based on God’s Word.

PRAYER

Father God, I want to be free to go exactly where and when You call me to go. Please help me to recall any past vows that are causing me to stumble in fear or conflict with Your perfect will. I choose to humbly acknowledge that I do not know my future, but I know that You are good and You have good plans for me (Jeremiah 29:11). Thank You for the grace to surrender my self-image and my protection to You. In Jesus name, I pray. Amen.

Uncovering Your Inner Vows

The following is a list of ungodly inner vows that children may make:

- When I grow up, no one is ever going to tell me what to do.
- I will never trust a man again.
- I will never trust a woman again.
- I will always follow the crowd.
- I will never get married.
- I will never have kids.
- I will never fly on an airplane.
- I will never fall in love again.
- I will never again let anyone hurt me, or get close to me.
- I will never be poor.
- I will never again embarrass myself in public.
- I will never speak in public again.
- I will never go to church when I am grown up.
- I will never be strict with my kids.
- I will never trust God again.

Pick an inner vow from the list above, and name some consequences that could result from making such an inner vow.

Unfortunately, an inner vow is not something you necessarily grow out of. Depending on the emotional state in which it was made, it may need to be uncovered and replaced with a new truth before it can be disempowered. The following exercises are designed to help you uncover any ungodly inner vows lurking in your subconscious. You will be looking at different areas of your life including: your past judgments, bad recurring themes in your life, your issues of trust, and your major constraints. Each category should help you see your life from a different angle, and therefore help uncover more inner vows.

The goal is for you to identify as many of your ungodly inner vows as possible. In the end, you will renounce every lie and replace it with the truth according to God's Word. Don't be concerned if this discovery process touches on more than just inner vows. The Lord may want to deal with related issues and heal a whole set of things at once. Just let the Holy Spirit have His way.

PAST JUDGMENTS

When you judge your parents, many times you make an inner vow at the same time. For example, there's a good chance an inner vow exists in your heart if you've ever heard yourself saying something like, "I will never _____ when I am a parent."

For this exercise, you will start by turning back to the previous chapter on Judging Others. Review the judgments you made against your father. Rewrite each judgment on the lines marked "judgment" below. Then ask the Holy Spirit if you made any inner vows related to those judgments. If so, record each inner vow below the judgment line it relates to.

Judgment: EXAMPLE - I judged my father for being poor.

Inner Vow: EXAMPLE - I will never be poor.

Judgment: _____

Inner Vow: _____

Judgment: _____

Inner Vow: _____

Judgment: _____

Inner Vow: _____

Judgment: _____

Inner Vow: _____

Judgment: _____

Inner Vow: _____

Judgment: _____

Inner Vow: _____

Now, turn back again to the previous chapter on Judging Others. This time review the

judgments you made against your mother. Again, rewrite each judgment on the line provided below. Then ask the Holy Spirit if you made any inner vows related to that judgment. If so, record each inner vow below the judgment it relates to.

Judgment: EXAMPLE - I judged my mother for rejecting me in the womb

Inner Vow: EXAMPLE - I will never trust women

Judgment: _____

Inner Vow: _____

Judgment: _____

Inner Vow: _____

Judgment: _____

Inner Vow: _____

Judgment: _____

Inner Vow: _____

Judgment: _____

Inner Vow: _____

Judgment: _____

Inner Vow: _____

Judgment: _____

Inner Vow: _____

UNCOVERING TRUST ISSUES

If you want to experience God's blessings, you're going to have to learn to trust Him. The Word says:

“...blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence is in Him.”
Jeremiah 17:7

Whenever we trust God, He will guide us and lead us in His divine direction.

“Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.” Proverbs 3:5-6

Did you ever pray continuously for something and your prayer wasn't fulfilled in the way you asked? What was the prayer and how did that outcome make you feel?

Write down any inner vows you may have made about not trusting God to answer your prayers in the future.

Inner Vow: _____

Have you ever lost someone very close to you? (i.e., a parent, sibling, child, or best friend) Did you blame God for their death or did you make any inner vows about not trusting God to care for your loved ones? If so, write it down.

Inner Vow: _____

Everything about the Christian walk requires you to put more trust in God than you do in man or yourself. If you get this concept backwards, your faith will be tossed to and fro every time someone lets you down. I don't think it's a coincidence that the very center verse in the Bible is:

“It is better to trust in the LORD than to put your confidence in man.”
Psalm 118:8

Have you ever put all your trust in someone and he or she really disappointed you, or even betrayed you? Experiencing that kind of pain may have caused you to make an inner vow not to trust certain people in the future. Even though the Bible warns not to put your confidence in man, you will still need to be willing to make yourself vulnerable to the actions of others in order to follow God. Many times God will call you to do something that will require you to rely or depend on another person.

My husband and I are currently waiting to adopt a baby. We are now going through all the emotional and practical preparations that any couple expecting a baby has to do in order to prepare for such a life-changing event. Yet the reality is, in our state of Arizona, the birth mother can change her mind at any point, up to three days after the birth of the baby. This is her legal right. The only reason we are willing to make ourselves so emotionally vulnerable to the whims of a woman we hardly know, is that we trust God. The Lord made it very clear that He was calling us to adopt this baby. God is not calling us to trust in the birth mother, but He is requiring us to make ourselves vulnerable to her actions. The point is, many times following Jesus requires us to be emotionally vulnerable and even dependant on others. **(Footnote – God faithfully blessed us with a beautiful baby boy born on 12/28/08, and the adoption has now been finalized.)**

Sometimes, God may even call you to trust the exact type of person who hurt you in the past. For example, suppose you were hurt or abused by a priest as a child. You could very possibly have made an inner vow never to trust a church leader again. Maybe you even walked away from the church at the time. But let's say, after a long season of wandering in the world, you came back to Jesus. The first thing God would want to do is to give you a pastor and a body of believers with whom to fellowship. Yet, until you deal with that inner vow not to trust church leaders, you will most likely have trouble submitting to your pastor and trusting his leadership.

If you have ever been ripped off, broken hearted, betrayed, or physically abused, you may have made inner vows about refusing to trust certain types of people in the future. Obviously, these inner vows could end up affecting your ability to follow God's lead in your life and your ministry. Now is the time to uncover these issues of trust.

Find a quiet place and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you any inner vows you may have made about refusing to trust or to ever make yourself vulnerable to certain types of people. (women, men, lawyers, doctors, stock brokers, authority figures, addicts, foreigners, clergy, etc)

Inner Vow: _____

Inner Vow: _____

Inner Vow: _____

The other person you must allow God to call you to trust is yourself. If you've ever vowed never to trust yourself in certain areas, you could definitely end up blocking God's will for your life. For example, if you don't trust yourself to have enough stamina to go on certain mission trips, you may end up turning down opportunities that God sends your way. **The truth is, as a Christian, you no longer get to decide what your capabilities are; that's God's job. God will always equip you for whatever he calls you to do.** So, all your preconceived limits have got to be renounced. In this next exercise you are going to hunt for any inner vows that relate to not trusting yourself.

Did you ever let yourself down by not performing well on a task or by embarrassing yourself in public?

Inner Vow: _____

Is there anything that you feel reluctant to do in life because you don't trust yourself to be good enough?

Inner Vow: _____

Have you ever vowed to avoid a certain type of activity? (i.e., meeting new people, public speaking, physical challenges or adventures)

Inner Vow: _____

Ask the Holy Spirit if there are any other areas where you do not trust yourself, and may have made a vow about it.

Inner Vow: _____

IDENTIFYING YOUR MAJOR CONSTRAINTS

A constraint is something that limits your ability or freedom in Christ. For example, an emotional or physical addiction, a phobia, a sinful behavior pattern, etc. Your constraints are what you must learn to overcome in order to reach your destiny in God. Many constraints may be caused by a demonically inspired inner vow.

For example, you may be constrained by a fear of public speaking that is being fueled by an inner vow to never make a fool of yourself in public. Another way to discover your inner vows is by identifying your constraints, and working backwards.

In the space provided below, write down your major constraints on the lines marked "constraints." Then ask the Holy Spirit if you made any vows related to that constraint. If so, record them on the lines marked "inner vow."

Constraint: EXAMPLE - I am terrified of public speaking.

Inner Vow: EXAMPLE - I will never make a fool of myself in public

Constraint: _____

Inner Vow: _____

Constraint: _____

Inner Vow: _____

BAD RECURRING THEMES

Another sign that an ungodly inner vow is operating in your life is that you keep experiencing the same undesirable events over and over again. For example, if you keep getting rejected by the opposite sex, it may be a sign that you vowed never to get close to that gender. Or if you are always lacking money, it may be because at some point in your life you believed money was evil, and you made a vow of poverty. In this exercise, you are looking for negative themes in your life that may have been set in motion by an inner vow.

Are there any negative themes in your life that keep repeating?

(i.e., rejection, poverty, abandonment, divorce, losing your job, excessive fear of an activity)

Holy Spirit, have I made any vows that relate to the negative themes in my life?

Inner Vow: _____

Inner Vow: _____

Inner Vow: _____

PRAYER TO BREAK INNER VOWS:

After reviewing your past judgments, trust issues, negative themes and major constraints, you have hopefully uncovered some inner vows that you would like to renounce. The following prayer is a guideline for you to use. Please invite the Holy Spirit to add to this prayer in whatever way He wants.

- **Lord, I now realize I have made an inner vow to _____.**
- **I hereby release myself from my vow that I would never _____.**
- **I renounce the lies the enemy wanted me to believe, such as _____.**
- **I forgive (name person involved) _____ for contributing to my forming this vow.**
- **Forgive me, Lord, for attempting to protect myself by making this vow.**
- **I choose to believe what You say about my new identity and destiny in Christ.**
- **I desire to be run by Your truth instead of lies.**
- **I choose to trust You, Lord. I know you will equip me for everything you call me to do. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.**

Inheritance Alert – YOUR NEW IDENTITY IN CHRIST

Your righteousness is an astonishing new identity that you received for free when you accepted Jesus as your Savior. You didn't earn or deserve this new identity. God just gave it to you as an amazing inheritance because of His grace. As you commit to believing what God has done for you, your new identity will begin to surface more and more.

The devil knows that you will no longer believe his ridiculous lies once you see how righteous God has made you in Christ. So, he lies and lies and lies to get you to doubt what you inherited. Whenever you hear a lie in your heart that contradicts your divine identity, fight back with the Word of God. That's what Jesus did. Every time the devil spoke to him, Jesus used Scripture as His weapon. Jesus said:

"It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.' "Matthew 4:4

"It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.' " Matthew 4:7

"Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.' " Matthew 4:10

Below is an example of how you can fight back with the Word, to lay hold of your new identity. By the way, the devil likes to speak in the first person so you think it's your thought.

The enemy's lie

Your Response According to God's Word

I am a lousy person.

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; **old things have passed away**; behold, all things have become new." 2 Corinthians 5:17

I can't _____.

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." Philippians 4:13

I am not smart enough.

"For the Lord gives wisdom, and from his mouth comes knowledge and understanding." Proverbs 2:5

I don't know what to do.

"I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you." Psalm 32:8

God doesn't love me anymore.

"Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be moved, yet My **unfailing love** for you will not be shaken, nor My covenant of peace be removed." Isaiah 54:10

Feast on your RIGHTEOUS new identity in Christ. The more you fill your heart and mind with the truth of who you are, according to God's Word, the richer you'll be.

IDENTIFYING TRAUMATIC EVENTS

As you reviewed the past judgments, themes, issues, and constraints in your life; did any painful memories come to your mind? For example, suppose you have a constraint that you are too fearful to fly on airplanes. Perhaps that constraint was caused by a bad experience you had on an airplane, or by seeing a plane crash on TV that scared you as a child?

Take a moment to look back over your inner vows and ask the Holy Spirit to help you recall any negative events in your life that relate to those vows. Try to come up with at least one event.

Traumatic Event: _____

Traumatic Event: _____

TAKING DOWN WALLS OF SELF-PROTECTION

God's love covers a multitude of sins. If you let His love cover your past mistakes and experiences, miracles can happen. The Lord wants to bring His healing power into all the painful memories and traumatic events in your life. Traumatic events are like festering wounds that can fill you with wrong beliefs about God, yourself and others. Until these wounds and beliefs are properly cleansed, they will never fully heal. One of the most effective ways to cleanse a trauma is to invite the Lord into your memory of that event. Not only is Jesus your healer but He is also your cleanser.

“... for He is like a purifying fire and like a cleansing soap.” Malachi 3:2

Don't try to start with the most traumatic event of your life. Instead, plan on beginning with an event that you feel comfortable revisiting. Once you've had experience inviting Jesus into your past, you will gain more trust in His love and in the power of this process. Then you will have the confidence you need to tackle the more traumatic events in your life.

Start by picking one of the events from your life that you identified in the previous exercise. Find a quiet place to be alone with God. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you recall as many details pertaining to that event as possible. The goal is to feel like you are really there. Now, ask Jesus where He was in the midst of that event. Write down what he shows you.

What lies did you choose to believe about yourself during that event?

What lies did you choose to believe about others during that event?

What lies, if any, did you choose to believe about God during that event?

What is Jesus thinking or saying to you during that event?

With what truth does God want you to replace the old lies surrounding that event?

- **Lord Jesus, I renounce the lies that _____.**
- **I now accept the truth that _____.**
- **I release every ungodly defense mechanism that I have been using to guard my emotions.**
- **I ask You, Holy Spirit, to fill the newly exposed areas of my heart with Your love and healing presence.**
- **Thank You, Lord, that You never leave me nor forsake me.**

Construction Zone – SLOW DOWN

Jesus is here to remove the section of the wall between you and God that contains lies about your safety. This fallen world has far too many unseen spiritual forces for you to act as your own protector. God is the only One faithful and powerful enough to keep you from harm. As you rest in His love and renounce any lies that say you must defend yourself, you position yourself under the protective wing of the Lord (Psalm 91).

Father God,

- **I renounce the lie that I must be my own guard. The truth is:**

"The Lord will keep you from all harm--he will watch over your life; the Lord will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore."
Psalm 121:7, 8

- **I renounce the lie that in times of trouble, I am alone and without protection. The truth is:**

"When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze." Isaiah 43:1,2

- **I renounce the lie that God will lead me into shame. The truth is:**

"No one whose hope is in You will ever be put to shame..." Psalm 25:3

- **I renounce the lie that I must live my life in fear because I am not safe. The truth is:**

"Whoever listens to me will live in safety and be at ease, without fear of harm." Proverbs 1:33

Father, I want to know the great blessing of trusting You for everything I need including physical and emotional protection. Thank You for giving me the confidence to remove the walls that I thought were protecting me, but were instead blocking Your love. I am so grateful that Your perfect love casts out fear. I invite You to wash away all my fear of rejection, and emotional and/or physical abuse. I ask for the grace to continue to trust You more and more. In the name of Jesus I pray. Amen.

If you have just yielded to the truth that God can and will protect you, another section of that wall between you and God has now been dismantled. Congratulations.

Praise The Lord

Let's praise God for His Word. Name three Scripture promises you are grateful for:

Private Practice

Read your three Scripture promises (that you wrote above) everyday for the next 40 days. Ask God to give you real life experiences with these Scriptures. Keep renewing your mind by decreeing those Scriptures daily until you believe them.