



INNER VOWS

Although Inner Vows are made early in life and are often forgotten, they act as directives, which control our responses to situations and people around us. Inner Vows are about keeping safe. How are you keeping yourself safe? Remember that inner vows are about protection. So when a Bitter Root Judgment comes to light, ask yourself this: "If I believed that, then how am I going to protect myself from the pain of what I believe?"

Inner Vow Characteristics:

- A decision we make that contains the words "always" or "never" or similar wording. Therefore, an Inner Vow is rigid and locks us into specific behaviors.
- Often forgotten by our conscious mind, or were never verbalized or consciously made. Many times we only know that an Inner Vow is present because of the bondage in our life. Inner Vows are often difficult to identify since they are usually made as a young child. The most powerful ones were made when we were very small. Look for the fruit because then there is a root.
- Usually connected to a Judgment. There may be several Inner Vows connected with one Judgment.
- Tend to take on a life of their own, producing negative fruit, even after judgments are healed because they are supported by habits such as:
 - Defensive habitual flight mechanisms.
 - Automatic anger.
 - Bitter root expectations.
 - Actions and words that trigger automatic reactions.
 - Anxieties and fears.
- Can be obstructions in our nature that restrict our feelings and actions by limiting our freedom in God.
- Often more powerful than even bitterness because they are often forgotten and, therefore, take on a hidden nature.
- May even obstruct physical development. Some inner vows have effects on our bodies. A young wife could not conceive and the doctors could find no reason for the couple's infertility. It was discovered that she was the oldest of nine children. Every time her mother got pregnant the mother became very ill and the responsibility for taking care of the children fell on the oldest. Feelings of imposition increased and anger began to build in the girl. Ultimately she cried out that she would never be like her mother and act like that. Her inner being easily interpreted such vows as orders never to allow pregnancy. Her inner healing through forgiving her mother and breaking the inner vow broke the hold on her body by proclaiming for her to receive and nurture life. Then she was able to conceive naturally.

When we judge another person and vow never to do what they did, the vow often works in reverse.

Romans 2:1 "You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge the other, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things." NIV

In the book of James, it is written: "Above all, my brothers, do not swear—not by heaven or by earth or by anything else. Let your 'Yes' be yes, and your 'No,' no, or you will be condemned." (James 5:12) Swear = vow, oath.

Other passages from the New Testament emphasize to Christians to simply speak the truth. Eccl. 5:4-7; Judges 11:29-40.

Types of Inner Vows

- **Negative.** They protect us from doing something we don't want to do by giving us something to point to for an excuse. From the outside, these things may even look pretty good.
 - The hard-driven, demanding types look like big successes, but they may be slaves to the vow: "I shall never submit."
 - The strong solitary single may look as if he or she has risen above the needs which are satisfied in a marriage relationship, but may be in bondage to the vow: "I shall never marry a man like my father (or a woman like my mother)." As soon as something shows up in the character or behavior of the other which reminds them of their parents, they bolt.
 - It is estimated that about twenty-five per cent of women are molested sexually in childhood by family members or others, and nearly all of these women make a strong inner vow to shut down their emotions and to distrust all men (and this often includes God). Because of this, relationships with other people are doomed to failure, and a happy and fulfilling marriage becomes almost impossible. The deep desire to protect oneself from further hurt causes many to make inner vows in childhood. Three of the most damaging inner vows are "I won't trust anyone," "I won't show my emotions," and "I must earn love and approval."

- **Vows That Appear to Be Positive.** They shape our outlook, our attitude, even our character to some extent. "Good" or "Positive" Inner Vows compel us to establish our own righteousness, whereas Jesus came to express His righteousness through us. We need to be free to let Him do this, rather than to be locked into our own decision which may be different than what the Lord wants.
 - Vow: "I will always be nice." What is wrong with this vow? Isn't it a good thing to always be nice? Sometimes we are reluctant to see that a "good" Inner Vow is a problem, but Inner vows always create difficulties for us. For instance, When George said "I will never be like my father." He, also, may have said "I will always be nice." George has his car repaired and the mechanic overcharges him by \$50. If George has made an Inner Vow to always be nice, it will be impossible for him to confront the mechanic, because that wouldn't be "nice." So he may rationalize his behavior: "Oh, well. It's only \$50, and I know he has a family to support, so I won't say anything." It would be appropriate to ask the mechanic politely about the overcharge, but the rigidity of the Inner Vow interferes with George's ability to do this. God didn't tell us to be "nice," but to be "loving," and there is a very big difference between the two.
 - Vow: "I shall always speak my mind." This vow gives the person permission to blurt out things that hurt people.
 - Vow: "I shall always be wealthy." They excuse the neglect of their personal relationships, even their relationship with God, as they keep their vow.
 - Vow: "I shall always be safe." They miss their potential because they refuse to take even modest risks.
 - Vows: "I will always be in charge." Drive everyone away with this attitude.
 - Vow: "I will not be loved because being loved means being molested." This vow leads a person to avoid intimacy with a man because men are not safe and will molest you.

It is important to understand how the human heart operates when it comes to vows. The heart does not make distinctions that the rational mind makes. The mind will reason that if one man is unkind that does not mean that all men are unkind. Not so with the heart. For example, if your father is mean, then your heart might believe that ALL men are mean. It will certainly believe that ALL FATHERS are mean, because the heart recognizes "father", "mother", "sister", "brother", "man", "woman", "him", "her", and "them". It's an all or nothing world to the heart, because the heart thinks in general categories. So if the heart believes a lie about one man, the heart will apply that lie to all males, including God.
- **Conditional Vows**--They traffic in extremes. These vows follow patterns like these:
 - If I don't get this new job, I am a total failure.
 - If I can buy a house in this neighborhood, I'll be a success.
 - If I make a fool of myself in public, I'll kill myself.
 - If my child's marriage fails, I'll die.

The difference between the New Year's Resolution and an Inner Vow is that the resolution was made with our head, whereas the Inner Vow was made with our heart. The way the Inner Vow got into our heart was that, at the time we made it, we were very much living from our heart. We were in a state of bitterness, and our emotions were greatly stirred. When we made an Inner Vow we were judging, and it is the power of the sin of judging that gives the Inner Vow its power. When we judge another person we are usurping God's role, because we don't trust Him to be the just judge. In the case of an Inner Vow, when we decide to do it ourselves, we are again usurping God's role. We do this because we don't trust Him to take care of us.

So how does the enemy become involved with our inner vows?

- Making a condemning judgment activates the law of judgment against us.
- Making an inner vow invites the enemy to get directly involved in helping us keep that inner vow.

How to identify an Inner Vow in your life

There are two ways to identify the presence of an Inner Vow.

1. **Directly.** Recognize the presence of the Inner Vow by the symptoms it produces in your life - rigid behavior that you hate. Inner Vows lock us into rigid behaviors. Any time we find ourselves doing things we don't want to do and we find ourselves unable to stop the behavior, an Inner Vow is probably present. This may sound a lot like the reaping from a root of bitterness, and it should. Most every time there is an Inner Vow, it is linked to a Bitter Root Judgment. They work as a unit to produce the rigid behavior. Therefore, any time we identify an Inner Vow, we need to look for the Judgment that gave rise to the Inner Vow. Once we can identify the Judgment we can remember the event where we were wounded and we judged. Then we can likely remember the words that we uttered when we made the Inner Vow. It is also possible that we cannot consciously remember making an Inner Vow, or exactly what we said. But the rigid pattern in our life will give us a clue to what we said.

2. **Indirectly.** When we have identified a Judgment, then look for any Inner Vows that may be attached to it. Always keep in mind that, whenever we identify an Inner Vow, there is almost always a Judgment that preceded it. Therefore, to erase an Inner Vow we must first take away the power that wrote it on our heart - the Judgment. We do this by forgiving the person you judged, repenting and renouncing the judgments and being forgiven by Jesus.

An Inner Vow is a mechanism that is almost always linked to a Bitter Root Judgment. Working together they cause us to do the things we don't want to do. When an Inner Vow is operating, it produces rigid and inflexible behavior, and our willpower is unable to overcome it. All Inner Vows, even "good" ones, need to be removed. Otherwise they will hold us in bondage; and they will obstruct our ability to obey Jesus.

Other Inner Vows that may have been spoken:

I will never...

grow up to be like my mother/father.
marry a man/woman like my father/mother.
let anyone close enough to hurt me like that ever again.
trust anybody again.
listen to God again.
talk to God again.
never trust God again.
be vulnerable again.
let anyone love me.
be weak.
allow myself to need.
let them take anything away from me.
allow anyone to touch me.
share what is mine.
allow anyone to give me money.
write, read, understand.
allow myself to be hit.
go out at night.
let you see who I am.
let anyone know I hurt.
tell a woman/man anything.
let a man/woman control me.
be responsible for the actions of others.
receive a compliment.

I will never...

participate in life.
allow a woman/man in my heart.
be anything worthwhile.
be sick.
be violent or abusive.
grow up, mature.
have children.

I will always...

remain aloof, separate.
be logical.
be in control of my life.

I will...

take care of them.
be better than them.
show them.
do it alone.
do it myself.
be invisible (go away).
make them love me. (by becoming the boy Daddy always wanted; by trying really hard; by being perfect; by never making a mistake, etc.

RENOUNCE THE VOW (V): *"Father, in the name of Jesus, I repent, renounce and break agreement with the vow that _____. I repent and renounce this vow on behalf of myself and my generations past, present, and future. I give the pieces of this broken vow to You, Lord. Please forgive me for taking over your role and trying to do things without you. I choose to trust and submit to you. I sever all connections with every evil power attached to this vow and I break their hold, power and effect in my life. Lord, help me to change the way I think and act so that I am seeking Your will in all areas of my life.*

(Information compiled from Elijah House, Sue Bowman – The Pool Ministries, and Gloria Gierach – 3:20 Ministry)

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