

MOVING BEYOND THE PAST

Lesson 7: Inner Vows

Introduction: Inner vows are made early in childhood, mainly in a more unconscious manner. Unless those inner vows are consciously made null and void they can keep a person stuck in the past and control their future. Many Christians are living a life with inner vows and wondering why Christianity does not ‘work’ for them. They need to be set free from the inner vows they have made and have lived out.

- I. What are Inner Vows?
 - A. An inner vow is a determination set by the mind and heart into the very being of person’s life at a very early age.
 - B. Many times an inner vow is made unconsciously and even if it is made consciously it becomes forgotten. However, our inner being persistently retains such programming.
 - C. The distinctive mark of an inner vow is that it resists the normal maturation process. A person does not ‘just grow out of it’. Inner vows resist change. “When I was a child, I used to speak as a child, think as a child, reason as a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things.’ (1 Corinthians 13:11)
- II. How Inner Vows Operate
 - A. Inner vows may not manifest themselves immediately. They may be like the programming of an electric clock on a range, they may not ‘kick on’ until the time is set by the vow.
 - B. They may ‘rest’ totally forgotten and dormant until triggered by a person or a situation. Thus a person, and others, may not realize a person has an inner vow until the ‘trigger’ occurs.
 - C. At times individuals may reveal what their inner vows are by their behavior, actions, or the words they speak. It as if the inner vow is controlling them-it is.
 - D. Even though behavior may reveal an inner vow, inner vows certainly do not want to be exposed and many times individuals are very resistant to acknowledge and overcome an inner vow in their life. Inner vows have great power, and most cannot be broken by simple repentance.
 - E. Inner vows were used at childhood for protective purposes. Thus inner vows can be used to build walls of protection. The outward manifestation can be anger, anxiety, fear, incapability to trust, a heart of stone, etc Anything to make sure the inner vow is not exposed and made null and void. What was meant to protect the child can destroy the adult.

Moving Beyond the Past-Lesson 7, Inner Vows from *Transformation of the Inner Man* by John Sanford, and *Encounter with God*, edited by Pastor Richard D. Dover, Seattle Open Door Church.

III. Examples of Inner Vows

- A. Just as the prodigal had made the decision to leave his father, he now purposed to return to his father. It was a conscious choice, just as his original decision to leave had been.
- B. We always have the choice to return to our Father when we have walked away from Him. But like the prodigal, we must determine to return and take the necessary steps toward restoration.
- C. If we ever want to live a victorious life we must make the decision to stop seeing God as our enemy and instead see He is the answer to our healing from past wounds. We must see the Father for who He is. The son could see who his father was. But we will find out the son still had a distorted perspective in regards to his father, so do we at times.

IV. *“Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you”* (Luke 15:18)

- A. The prodigal accepted total responsibility for the distance between his father and himself. He did not try to blame others for his problem or to sugarcoat the seriousness of the situation. Notice his choice of words: “I have SINNED,” not “I have made a little mistake.”
- B. He fully admitted where he had failed and knew that he was not even worthy to call himself a son anymore. He was a broken man, and knew it.
- C. Before we can be restored to God and others, we must admit our sin and accept responsibility for the “mess” we find ourselves in. True repentance is evidenced by a change in actions and is a prerequisite for genuine healing and restoration. True repentance is not remorseful feelings.
- D. The truth is that many times we have wounds and scars because of what others have done to us. They are to blame, not us. The problem is that many times we make very poor choices of how we deal with the wounds. We become bitter, hard-hearted, resentful, hateful, make inner vows and bitter root judgments, choose to go to sin to deal with our wounds and scars.

If we want to receive inner healing to live an overcoming life, we must confess that we have coped with our wounds in an unhealthy manner. We must admit that we have sinned against ourselves, others, and God. We must come to a place of a sorrow for our sin that leads to repentance.

We must understand that our heavenly Father wants us to come back to Him not

as worthless slave but as a forgiven child.

- V. *“His father saw him and was filled with compassion for him...”* (Luke 15:20)
- A. When the prodigal began the journey of reconciliation, his loving father rushed out to meet him. He was overcome with joy that the son who had been lost to him was now restored to him. The past was forgotten and forgiven in the tender embrace of the father.
 - B. Not only did the father totally forgive his son, but he also completely restored him to his former status in the family.
 - a. He put a robe upon him clothing him in new garments free of the stench of his sinful life. (When we come to God with a repentant heart we are covered by the blood of Christ. We are cleansed of all unrighteousness.)
 - b. He gave him a ring, signifying the covenant that existed between them as father and son. (When we come to God with a repentant heart we are one in Christ and have full access to the Father.)
 - c. He put shoes upon his son’s feet, representing his rightful place as a son. In Bible times, servants went barefoot but sons wore shoes. (When we come to God with a repentant heart we are seated in heavenly places with Christ Jesus.)
 - d. And finally, he killed his fattened calf, demonstrating his great joy and delight at the return of his prodigal son. (When we come to God with a repentant heart we are reminded that Jesus died on the cross for us so that we can live a victorious life over all wounds that have occurred our life.)
 - C. It should be obvious that if along life’s journey we have made very bad choices to cope with emotional wounds and pain, to the point of sinning against ourselves, others, and God, that we have a Loving Heavenly Father that wants to bring healing to us and restore us to Him.
 - D. Everything the father did for his son. God will do for you as you move toward Him in sincerity of heart. Acknowledge your desperate need of Him. Confess the areas of rebellion, independence, stubbornness, and blatant willful sin, and put your trust in the loving arms of the Father. He will not only forgive you, He will bring miraculous healing in your life.