

About Forgiveness, Inner Wounds and Inner Vows

These three are the powerful “knockout combination” that the Enemy uses to immobilize Christians. (1) Someone hurts or offends you. (2) That offense causes a wound. Then, (3) we make promises (vows) to protect ourselves from further harm.

In churches, we tend to only address forgiveness. However, even when we choose to forgive those who wrong us, our inner hurts and wounds remain unhealed and the vows remain in full effect, causing much damage in our future relationships with other people.

As an example, let’s say a friend accidentally shoots you in the arm with an arrow. Then he runs up to you, begging your forgiveness. You can see he is truly repentant, so, being a good Christian, you immediately forgive him.

That’s nice of you to forgive him, but it doesn’t change the fact that there is still an arrow sticking out of your arm! The arrow needs to be removed and the wound must be healed.

When something like this happens, our minds begin to make vows (rules) that will “protect us” in the future. A typical vow might be, “I will never trust anyone who has a bow and arrow again!” Sounds like a reasonable vow, huh? But what if your mother or father (authority figures) hurt you when you were young? Are the vows you made to protect yourself from them still affecting you relationships with family and friends today?

What if someone you really loved and trusted violated that trust? Do you find that you cannot fully love and trust anyone today...including your spouse? How is that affecting your marriage?

My experience has shown me that the average Christian is filled with Inner Wounds and Inner Vows. These issues are the cause of their hardened-hearts. Furthermore, they dramatically retard the process of the renewing of our minds that the Apostle Paul talks about in Romans, Chapter 12.

The following sections on Forgiveness, Inner Healing of Hurts and Wounds, and Identifying and Breaking Inner Vows are 3 of the steps in my *Ten Steps to Spiritual Freedom*. I pray God will use them mightily in your life!

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Forgiveness vs. Holding Onto Bitterness

(By far the most emotional step. If not, the person probably isn't being completely honest with himself or you.)

Failure to forgive others is, without a doubt, the number one sin that gives demons a right to attack Christians. Even if someone genuinely wronged you, God requires **you** to forgive them. You may say, "I can never forgive what he did to me!" Perhaps it is more accurate to say, "I **don't want** to forgive him!" If it was impossible to forgive, God would not require it of us. It may be difficult to **forget**, but forgiving is not the same as forgetting. Likewise, you may feel a strong sense of anger. Anger is a feeling...it is an emotion. Forgiveness is not a feeling. It's a decision of your will (mind). The Bible tells us:

- "Be **ANGRY**, and yet **DO NOT SIN**; **do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not give the devil an opportunity.**" (Eph. 4:26-27) Holding onto anger gives the devil a stronghold.
- At the end of the Lord's Prayer, Jesus warns us, "**For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions.**" (Matthew 6:14-15)
- He who hates his brother **is in darkness, and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because darkness has blinded his eyes.** (1 John 2:11)

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The Parable of the Unmerciful Servant provides us with a very clear picture of how God views unforgiveness, and the consequences we will suffer if we fail to forgive:

Matthew 18: 21-35

Then Peter came and said to Him, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven."

"For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. When he had begun to settle them, one who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him. But since he did not have the means to repay, his lord commanded him to be sold, along with his wife and children and all that he had, and repayment to be made. So the slave fell to the ground and prostrated himself before him, saying, 'Have patience with me and I will repay you everything.'

"And the lord of that slave felt compassion and released him and forgave him the debt. But that slave went out and found one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and he seized him and began to choke him, saying, 'Pay back what you owe.'

"So his fellow slave fell to the ground and began to plead with him, saying, 'Have patience with me and I will repay you.' But he was unwilling and went and threw him in prison until he should pay back what was owed.

"So when his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were deeply grieved and came and reported to their lord all that had happened.

"Then summoning him, his lord said to him, 'You wicked slave, I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow slave, in the same way that I had mercy on you?'

*"And his lord, moved with anger, **handed him over to the TORTURERS** until he should repay all that was owed him."*

*Jesus then said, "**My heavenly Father will also do the same to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother FROM YOUR HEART.**"*

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Unforgiveness is obviously a sin that God will not tolerate in His children. How can we get out from under the burden of carrying this sin?

Again, forgiveness is not forgetting. Forgetting may be a result of forgiveness, but it is never the means of forgiveness. When we bring up the past against others, we haven't forgiven them.

Forgiveness is a decision we make, a crisis of the will. Since God requires us to forgive, it is obviously something we CAN do. (He would never require us to do something we cannot do.) But forgiveness is difficult for us because it pulls against our concept of justice. We want revenge for offenses suffered. But we are told never to take our own revenge (Romans 12:19). "Why should I let them off the hook?" we protest. You let them off your hook, but they are never off God's hook. He will deal with them fairly—something we cannot do.

Forgiveness is agreeing to live with the consequences of another person's sin. Forgiveness is costly; we pay the price of the evil we forgive. Yet you're going to live with those consequences whether you want to or not; your only choice is whether you will do so in the **BONDAGE of BITTERNESS** or in the **FREEDOM of FORGIVENESS**. That's how Jesus forgave you—He took the consequences of your sin upon Himself. All true forgiveness is substitutional, because no one forgives without bearing the penalty of the other person's sin.

Why then do we forgive? Because Christ forgave us. How do you forgive from the heart? First, you acknowledge the hurt and the hate. If your forgiveness doesn't visit the emotional core of your past, it will be incomplete. Christians feel the pain of interpersonal offenses too, but we don't want to acknowledge it. Let God bring the pain to the surface so He can deal with it. This is where the healing takes place. As you read the list of names, be prepared to have people come to your mind that have been blocked from your memory. Just say their name immediately, before continuing on with the rest of the written list:

Dear Heavenly Father, I thank You for the riches of Your kindness, mercy, and patience, knowing that Your kindness has led me to repentance (Romans 2:4).

I confess that I have not extended that same patience and kindness toward others who have offended me, but instead I have held bitterness and resentment in my heart. I pray that during this time of self-examination, You would bring to mind only those people that I have not forgiven in order that I may do so now (Matthew 18:35).

Father, in the Name of Jesus Christ, as an act of my will, I choose to forgive the following people:

- 1. I choose to forgive & release (name) for (describe what he/she did) .**
- 2. I choose to forgive & release (name) for (describe what he/she did) .**
- 3. Etc., etc.**

I also pray that if I have offended others, You would bring to mind only those people from whom I need to seek forgiveness and the extent to which I need to seek it (Matthew 5: 23,24). I ask this in the precious name of Jesus. Amen.

Inner Healing of Hurts and Wounds

(Healing the Heart Beyond Forgiveness)

Forgiving from the heart and releasing everyone who has ever harmed us can remove the root of bitterness from our heart. Even so, the heart must be healed to prevent the bitterness from returning. Remember, when we speak of the heart, we are referring to the inner man, our spirit (*the part that relates to God*) and our soul (*mind, will, and emotions*).

The painful experiences of our lives are locked into the permanent memory section of our minds. Painful memories, whether conscious or subconscious (*present in the mind without awareness of them*), have affected our spirit and may have wounded it. These painful memories may also have crushed our will and shattered our emotions. **These negative, painful experiences stored in our heart cause us to see and understand life according to our experiences. They serve to control us by affecting our behavior. We are bound into negative patterns by the stored pains of the past. These harmful patterns must be changed for us to walk in Kingdom freedom.**

The ministry of Christ Jesus includes healing the brokenhearted. God has provided all that we need in Jesus to heal our wounded spirit and soul. We need only to appropriate (*apply*) the ministry of Jesus to heal our broken heart and to be set free from the bondage of our wounds. When the negative experiences stored in our memories are healed, they will no longer cause bitterness to return. Jesus, the Anointed One, is the Healer who can repair all damage making our heart brand new again.

Psalm 147: 9-3: *The Lord builds up Jerusalem; He gathers together the outcasts of Israel. He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.*

Luke 4:18-19a: *“The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed (bruised), to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.”*

Our past wounds can cause us to have a **poor self-image, low self-esteem, lack of confidence, and lack of motivation.** They can also cause **unreasonable fear** that cripple us. This irrational fear may make us avoid relationships and life situations that God desires for us. Fear may cause us to act and react so that we miss entering into some of the good things God desires for us.

Our actions and reactions are affected by our stored, painful memories. **We may often think we are reacting to circumstances, but we may actually be reacting from an attitude created by our past hurting memories.**

THE PROCESS OF HEALING

Healing does not automatically and completely take place the day we receive Jesus as Savior and Lord. However, the potential for healing and the process of healing does begin at this point.

As with every ministry of Christ provided by God, our part is to believe with the heart and confess with the mouth. The resurrected Christ is within us to fulfill the Word of God. Healing our wounded heart is a provision of the Word of God. We have only to ask in prayer, believing in the heart and confessing with the mouth, and it is done. For some of us with severe experiences in our past it may be helpful to pray specifically for healing of our wounded hearts. It may also be very helpful to pray with another godly person. (James 5:16)

If we can recognize areas of painful memories in our heart, God wants to heal them. We can **release the memories to God for healing. Holding on to a negative past can hinder a godly future.** Attaining the resurrection life of Christ involves forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forward to those things which are ahead (*Philippians 3:11-14*). By **an act of our will, we must choose to stop relating to stress from past memories.** Although the decision to be healed is ours....it is Christ who does the work.

It is important to ask God for His provision. James 4:2 KJV, says, ***“Ye have not because ye ask not.”*** Asking specifically is an important principle of prayer. If we ask God to heal our hurting memories now, and believe in our heart that we have what we ask, it is done. We must confess with our mouth it is done and thank Him for healing the memory now (Mark 11:23). **We must not continue to meditate the**

memory and pray for God to heal us someday. We are not asking for Jesus to provide healing for us. **It is already fully provided.** We are coming into agreement with what Jesus has provided and appropriating it into our lives.

Come into the presence of God. Pray and worship Him until the anointing of the Holy Spirit is present and with you. Ask the Holy Spirit to bring into your mind all the hurting memories that need to be healed. Some memories may be very obvious, while others have been buried deep within your subconscious mind. Do not take lightly any memory the Holy Spirit brings to your mind. When you recognize negative memories, pray something like the following prayer from the heart.

Heavenly Father, in the Name of Jesus, by the power of the Holy Spirit, I release to You for healing all the wounded, hurting, or negative memories of my entire life, whether conscious or subconscious, from my conception through my birth, the first few years of my life, my childhood, all my adult life, and to this present moment. I specifically release to You for healing the memory of _____, _____, _____, and _____, (list more if needed).....

Father, I release all these memories to You and ask that You heal every inner hurt or wound, every negative memory and scar that I have suffered and carried as a result of the offenses committed against me by other people. I also ask that You heal all inner wounds suffered because of my own sinful or foolish acts. Heal and renew my mind, memory, and emotions right now I pray. (Rom. 12:2)

Father, the inner wounds I suffered have prevented my emotions and decision making processes from developing in the way that You would like. But You, oh Lord, are the One Who binds up the brokenhearted; Who proclaims liberty to the captives, and Who opens the prison door to those who are bound. (Isaiah 61:1)

I ask that You release me from all the stress, anxiety, and negative patterns of behavior that I developed as a result of my inner wounds. In the Name of Jesus Christ, I rebuke the victim mentality that kept telling me I will never get any better; that I'll always be miserable; and that I'll never be able to change! I reject those lies and choose to believe that in Christ Jesus, I am more than a conqueror! (Romans 8:37) As an act of my will, I choose to never again receive stress, anxiety, fear, anger or depression from any of these memories.

In faith, I boldly ask Father, that You supernaturally restore, right now, all those things that may have been missed in the normal development of my emotions, thought processes, and my ability to develop and maintain proper relationships with other people. Father, from this moment forward, enable me to live my Christian life in a holy way that is pleasing to You.

Thank You for healing me. I declare that by the stripes Jesus bore for me, I am healed of all these hurtful memories, in Christ's Name. Thank You, Father, for healing me. Help me with any re-programming that needs to be done in my mind and reactions to people and situations so that I never again fall back into any of the old patterns that I have now been healed of. (Romans 12:2)

In the Name of Jesus, I make this command and declaration to all the powers of darkness: From this moment forward, you may never again use any of these old memories to bring stress into my life or affect my life in any negative way! In Jesus' Name, Amen!

Continue to repeat this process as long as the Holy Spirit directs and memories are coming forth. All memories do not have to be healed in one season. Many memories may come forth in rapid order, or there may be one at a time. No memory that the Father brings up should be treated as insignificant. Ask the Holy Spirit to bring forth the memories that are to be healed at this time.

We must always walk in the process of repentance, forgiveness, and healing; repentance for every wrong motive, as we recognize them; forgiveness for all offenses as they occur; and healing

for every painful experience. If we are wounded during the course of the day, we can be completely healed before bedtime.

I found in the early years of my walking in forgiveness and inner healing, that some severe situations took me a few days to fully appropriate the ministry of Jesus to heal. This was my own fault. I think my soul sometimes wanted to be angry for a while and got in the way of extending forgiveness and receiving inner healing. Subconsciously, I may have been thinking something like, **“Don’t heal me right now, God. I’m not through being angry yet.” But that was a wrong attitude.**

Having a healed heart that is free of selfish desires and fears prepares us to fully seek the kingdom of God. A pure and uncontaminated heart will seek only to serve God. Agreement with God and His universal laws opens the eyes of our understanding so that the spirit of wisdom and revelation may enlighten us to know the exceeding greatness of His mighty power (Ephesians 1:17-19).

Identifying & Breaking Inner Vows

Instructions for the Section on Breaking Inner Vows:

Before coming to your Freedom Session, you must read all of the following information regarding Inner Vows. Although you may not be aware of it now, Inner Vows have great control over how you live your life and how you relate to other people. As you read through this material, place a big “X” in the box (☐) in front of every Inner Vow listed that applies to you. If you think of some we haven’t listed, write them down immediately on this paper. If you know the name of the person who caused you to make each Inner Vow, please list their first name by the check mark.

An inner vow, by definition, is **a personal determination made as a reaction to an event**. The reaction does not have to be spoken out loud for the vow to be made. An Inner Vow says that “**I will never...**” or “**I will always...**” be a certain way, or do a certain thing. *(Please put an “X” in the box in front of every Inner Vow that you believe you may have made....and write the person’s name who caused you to make that vow.)*

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> I will never trust anyone again. | <input type="checkbox"/> I will always be unattractive. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I will never cry again. | <input type="checkbox"/> I will always be in control of my life. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I will never love my spouse again. | <input type="checkbox"/> I will always protect my heart from pain. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I will never get hurt again. | <input type="checkbox"/> I will always be different and an outcast. |

(A much more extensive list of Inner Vows can be found at the end of this article.)

An Inner Vow is a “bad thing” because it is activated by our personal spirit. As God designed it, **our spirit** is the part of our being which **rules over the rest of our being.** **The strength of an Inner Vow is so great that it affects and even controls the mind, will, emotions, soul and body.**

The problem is that Inner Vows override our ability to allow Jesus to direct our mind, will and emotions. Inner Vows harden our hearts. The Bible says: “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you. I will remove from you **your heart of stone** and give you a heart of flesh.” (Ezekiel 36:26) Inner vows are in direct opposition to what God wants to accomplish in us. We are to have tender hearts. When our hearts are hardened, we cannot love the Lord our God with all our heart, nor can we love our neighbor as ourselves.

A heart of stone is a defense mechanism or “hiding place” we build to protect ourselves from further hurt. It is often formed during our childhood years and then forgotten by our conscious mind. It is also quite commonly formed as we grow up because of hurts and wounds we suffer. Spouses all too often harden their hearts toward one another so that love and meaningful communication ceases to flow between them. A heart of stone functions automatically to pre-program our reactions to people or situations. These reactions result in sinful, “autopilot-like” responses to fear (**fight or flight**), frustration (**anger**) and dissatisfaction (**judgment/criticism**).

Inner Vows result in obstructions to our God ordained nature. They cause us to feel, act, and think only as the vow instructs. Inner vows have the power to very effectively obstruct our emotional, social and Christian development.

When we judge another and vow never to do what they did, the vow often works in reverse. (see **Romans 2:1**) Inner Vows are often hard to identify since many are made as a young child. They are often even more powerful than bitterness because they are forgotten and, therefore, take on a hidden nature.

Inner Vows tend to take on a life of their own, producing negative fruit even after forgiveness has been extended and inner wounds healed, because they are supported by habits such as **running away from situations, automatic anger, words that trigger automatic responses, anxieties and fears.** The Bible clearly warns us: “**Do not harden your hearts.**” (Ps. 95:8, Heb. 12:1, Col.3:5-10)

Some symptoms of Inner Vows include: **Heartlessness; uncaring; coldness; will not be ministered to; selfishness; withdrawal; unable to cry; feels unloved; isolation; criticalness; refuses gifts;** etc.

The destruction caused by Inner Vows: Breaks up families; breaks up churches; destroys businesses; builds up stress; breaks down the immune system; causes illness; loneliness; gaping holes in one's armor; cannot heed warnings; subject to temptation; delusions....and it is always "**everyone else's fault.**"

Inner Vows always **look to oneself as the source of protection, instead of to God.** "If God is not the center **of all**, He is not the center **at all.**" Therefore, **the root issue is sin; the sin of depending upon self.** All sin is handled at the Cross, by Christ's shed blood. The consequences of those sins are dealt with by the power of the Cross to destroy sinful structures or patterns of response. The result is a healthy soul, free of wounds and flowing with the Holy Spirit.

Destructive Inner Vows in Marriage **(Male/Female Relationships)**

Often, we see people struggling in marriages where the partners truly appear to hate one another. Every word spoken seems to prompt an argument. No matter how much wise counseling they receive, the intensity of their anger never weakens. They want to please God, but His command to "love one another" is beyond their grasp.

The healing of these kinds of relationships has several parts:

1. Forgiving the spouse for all offenses committed.
2. Casting out demons that gained access because of the bitterness each spouse carried.
3. Prayer for the Healing of Inner Hurts & Wounds
4. Breaking Inner Vows

The first three are relatively easy to do. However, some people have made so many inner vows, it seems almost impossible to penetrate their defenses. Since Inner Vows operate in the subconscious mind, it is often difficult for the person to consciously remember and identify all the vows that were made. Whether they can consciously remember them or not, be certain of this: **Inner Vows over-ride and control the mind, will, emotions, soul and body. Therefore, Inner Vows control the way each spouse relates to the other.**

In marriages, a traumatic emotional event, or a series of smaller unpleasant events can occur that cause spouses to "**build up their defenses**" against one another by making Inner Vows. These complex networks of **emotional shields** (vows) are intended to protect one person from receiving further emotional pain. In truth, however, a hardened heart, increased aggression toward the other person, and a non-functional marriage are the usual results. For those who have been married more than once, **be aware that vows made during previous marriages are fully effective during later marriages. A divorce does not wipe the slate of Inner Vows clean!**

The Bible says of married people that "**the two shall become one flesh.**" If one spouse becomes hardened and bitter, erecting emotional walls (inner vows) of defense against the other, the result is the hardening of the other spouse's heart is well. Why? The answer is a simple spiritual reality: The two people become "**ONE FLESH**" and, therefore, what affects one spouse, affects the other.

As an example, when a husband allows his own emotional pain to justify emotionally locking the wife out of his life, the husband unintentionally **injures HIMSELF even more,** because he causes emotional injury to his wife. You may say, "No. That's not true. I don't like my spouse any more....so locking him/her out of my life will help **protect me** and make **me** feel better!"

That carnal line of reasoning is wrong....*very wrong*. In fact, it's a lie, straight from the pit of hell! When you hurt your spouse, you cause yourself even more injury. How can that be? "The two shall become **ONE** flesh"....therefore, what hurts one, hurts the other....even if the pain is not immediately apparent. "**The TWO** shall become **ONE FLESH**."

Intentionally hurting or alienating your spouse **violates God's law**. Violating God's law is called "SIN." At the root of all sin is something called PRIDE. Pride says that "God's laws don't apply to me. I can live just fine by making up my own rules." The sin of PRIDE allows all kinds of chaos to enter our lives. Here's why:

"GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE."
Submit therefore to God...(Then, when you) Resist the devil...He will flee from you...
(James 4:6-10...*italics added*)

When you are **PRIDEFUL**, God's Word says that **He will OPPOSE YOU!** Does it seem like God has been against you...and not for you? How can you correct that? First, confess your pride and rebellion. Repent and "turn away" from your sinful ways. Then, find out what God expects of you and make a commitment to change your life. Ask God to help you change. You can't do it on your own! Here are some of God's rules for marriage (**various versions of the Bible**):

And **if you are married, stay married**. This is the Master's command.... (1Co 7:10)

Wives, **submit yourselves to your own husbands, as to the Lord...as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything**. (Eph 5:22-24)

Husbands, **love your wives**, even **as Christ also loved the church**.... (Eph 5:25-29)

"For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be **joined** to his wife, and **the two of them shall be one flesh**...." (Eph 5:31-32)

But also let everyone of you in particular so **love his wife even as himself**, and **the wife that she defers to her husband**. (Eph 5:33) (Definition of DEFERS: concedes priority. gives way to, and usually acknowledge the merit of someone's judgment, opinion, wishes, or action)

Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as is becoming in the Lord. (Col 3:18)

Husbands, love your wives, and **do not be bitter against them**. (Col 3:19)

Let the aged women....**train the young women to love their husbands, to love their children children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, subject to their own husbands, that the Word of God may not be blasphemed**. (Titus 2:3-5)

Likewise, **wives, be in subjection to your own husbands**..... (1Peter 3:1)

Likewise, **husbands**, live together according to knowledge, **giving honor to the wife** as to the weaker vessel, the female, **as truly being co-heirs together** of the grace of life, **not cutting off your prayers**. (1Peter 3:7)

And finally, all **be of one mind, having compassion on one another**, loving the brothers, **tenderhearted**, friendly. **Never give back evil for evil, or reviling (insults or verbal attacks) for reviling**, but on the contrary, **giving blessing**, knowing that you are called to this **so that you might inherit blessing**. **For he that wants to love life and to see good days, let him restrain his tongue from evil, and his lips from speaking guile. Let him turn aside from evil and do good.... the Lord's face is against those who do evil**. (1Peter 3:8-12...*italics added*...
These verses are written to the whole Body of Christ, and therefore, also to husbands and wives.)

In our society, there are many people (**even in the church**) whose rebellion immediately rises up against the Word of God written in the above Scriptures. To those people, I'm sorry you feel that way; but God will not change His mind! **Here's what He has to say on the subject:**

1. Rebellion against God is as bad as witchcraft, and (*your*) arrogant disobedience is as sinful as idolatry. (1 Sam. 15:23) (GNB...italics added)
2. "**GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD** (*that's you*), but gives grace to the humble..." (James 4:6-10...italics added)

God destroyed nations for their rebellion and idolatry. If you harbor willful, sinful, rebellion and arrogance against His Word, **it will bring about your own destruction unless you repent.**

Once a person has repented of their rebellion, forgiven their spouse, cast out any demons and prayed for the healing of inner hurts/wounds, they are ready to work on identifying and breaking their Inner Vows.

Again, since Inner Vows operate subconsciously, it is often difficult for the person to remember and identify all the vows that were made. Remembrance will come with the help of the Holy Spirit when the person reviews the list of Inner Hurts and Wounds that they prayed about in Step 4 of the Freedom Process. It is also extremely helpful to look at the **List of Inner Vows** that we have supplied. When reviewing this list, many people will immediately remember some of their own Inner Vows.

As mentioned earlier, a traumatic emotional event in a marriage, or a series of smaller unpleasant events can cause spouses to "**build up their defenses**" against one another by making Inner Vows. Sometimes the walls of Inner Vows that spouses erect to "protect themselves from further pain," are inter-woven like a chain-linked fence, to insure that if one strand weakens, the remaining strands will take over to keep the other spouse locked out. (*Please put an "X" in the box in front of every Inner Vow that you believe you may have made....and write the person's name who caused you to make that vow.*)

- I will never get a divorce, but as of this moment, **this marriage is over!**
- I will never trust my spouse again.
- I will never let my spouse control our relationship.
- I will never allow myself to be vulnerable.
- I will never let my spouse hurt me again. (**hard heart**)
- I will never agree with my spouse on anything. (**arguing, quarreling**)
- I will never cooperate with my spouse on anything. (**contention**)
- I will never love, or be nice to, my spouse again.
- I will never give affection to, or receive affection from my spouse again.
- I will never want to touch, or be touched by my spouse again.
- I will never let my spouse get away with offending me again.
- I will always hate my spouse, but I will be civil to him/her in public.
- I will always try to make my spouse suffer as much as I do.
- I will always do the minimum necessary to keep this marriage going.

And, the most dangerous, self-destructive Inner Vow, which supports all of the vows above:

- I will never trust God to fix my spouse....or our marriage. (or me)**

When spouses come to see their Inner Vows as sin, they open the door for God to change things. As spouses **confess** their vows as sin, **repent, ask God for help**, use their authority to **break inner vows** and **discipline themselves** to keep from **falling back into old negative patterns** of behavior, they are on their way to a restored relationship with Christ, and with each other.

Here are some additional Inner Vows to read through **carefully**. Again, *please put an "X" in the box in front of every Inner Vow that you believe you have made....and write the person's name who caused you to make that vow.*

I will never:

- I will never trust _____ again.
- I will never trust a _____.
- I will never trust _____ with money.
- I will never trust _____'s judgment.
- I will never trust _____'s word.
- I will never (do this) unless he/she (does this) first.
- I will never trust an authority figure again.
- I will never trust there will be enough
- I will never be safe financially.
- I will never trust anyone.
- I will never let myself love _____ again.
- I will never let anyone love me.
- I will never love my step-children.
- I will never love my in-laws.
- I will never try to make _____ love me again.
- I will never let myself love a job again.
- I will never love my _____ again.
- I will never love my spouse again.
- I will never enjoy intimacy with my spouse.
- I will never give in to my spouse without a struggle.
- I will never cry again.
- I will never let _____ see my emotions.
- I will never allow myself to be vulnerable.
- I will never let _____ hurt me again.
- I will never let a man/woman control me.
- I will never believe anyone again.
- I will never forgive my _____.
- I will never forgive him/her unless he/she apologizes to me first.
- I will never have another friend like _____.
- I will never put myself at risk by _____.
- I will never be beautiful/handsome again.
- I will never be attractive again.
- I will never talk to _____ again.
- I will never eat _____ again.
- I will never talk about my past again.
- I will never try to please people; it can't be done.
- I will never sing in public again.
- I will never dance in public again.
- I will prove they were wrong about me.
- I will prove to people that Jesus did call me.
- I will prove that I am not worthless.
- I will never care about _____ again.
- I will never claim my step-kids as my own.
- I will never ask anyone for help again.
- I will never let other people's anger affect me.

- I will never allow myself to feel pain again.
- I will never allow myself to feel sorrow.
- I will never allow myself to receive other people's evil/negative words.
- I will never own a _____.
- I will never let my mother cook.
- I will never let things be disorganized.
- I will never be weak.
- I will never allow myself to need.
- I will never let them take anything from me.
- I will never allow anyone to touch me.
- I will never share what is mine.
- I will never allow anyone to give me money.
- I will never fight back again.
- I will never give birth to a boy child.
- I will never try _____ again.
- I will never be rejected again.

I will always:

- I will always discipline my life.
- I will always be in control of my life.
- I will always protect my heart from pain.
- I will always protect my heart from sorrow.
- I will always remain aloof, separate.
- I will always be logical.
- I will always be in charge...I will always win.
- I will always be better than everyone else.
- I will always trust my opinion over others.
- I will always prove that I am not worthless.
- I will always make _____ proud of me.
- I will always take care of myself first.
- I will always have the best of everything.
- I will always hurt others more than they hurt me.
- I will make _____ proud of me someday.
- I will always be a loser.
- I will always be less than others.
- I will always have more problems than others.
- I will always be ugly.
- I will always be overweight.
- I will always be unattractive.
- I will always be clumsy.
- I will always be accident prone.
- I will always be dumb.
- I will always be a poor reader.
- I will always be a poor speaker.
- I will always be a day late and a dollar short.
- I will always have money troubles.
- I will always be unemployed.
- I will always be different and an outcast.

Prayer for the Breaking of Inner Vows

Instructor reads this out loud: Before you came to the session, you prepared a list of Inner Vows that you made during your lifetime. *(Hand the List to the Counselee.)* As the handout taught you, these Inner Vows can dramatically affect your life, your relationships with other people, and your ability to serve God. Inner vows shift your dependence away from God, and onto yourself. They violate the Biblical command to “Trust in the Lord with all your heart...” To place our trust in ourselves, instead of in God, is called “PRIDE.” Since we know that “**God is opposed to the proud,**” (James 4: 6-10) we must repent of our pride and break all ungodly Inner Vows.

Here is a prayer of repentance and for the breaking of Inner Vows you have made:

Heavenly Father, because of the people who have hurt me during my life, I have made Inner Vows that I foolishly believed would protect me from further harm. I have depended upon the power of my own will to insulate me from what others would do to me. The hardening of my heart caused by these Inner Vows has affected my mind, will, emotions, soul and body. I now see that this has caused many further problems by alienating me from the people around me. This has only lead to more fear, distrust, suspicion and hurt in my life. Father, here are the vows I made that You have brought to mind:

[\(List all the Inner Vows you marked here\)](#)

In the Name of Jesus Christ, I break each and every one of these inner vows and the curses they have placed on my life. I declare their power over my life to be null and void. Father, I realize that by making these Inner Vows, I placed my trust in them, rather than in Your power, mercy and love. By trusting in myself instead of in You, I have created roadblocks to receiving the healing of my inner hurts and wounds that I so desperately desire. Father, I have sinned by not trusting You, and I repent of my sin right now, in the Name of Jesus Christ my Lord. It is not by my Inner Vows, but by His stripes that I am healed.

I ask, Father, that you forgive me of the sin of having placed my trust in something other than You. I ask that You heal my inner hurts and wounds, and remove all traces of these Inner Vows from my spirit so that they will never again affect me, or the people around me. Help me quickly renew my mind so that I will not fall back into any of the old, destructive patterns of thought and behavior that were brought about by the Inner Vows I have now repented of. I ask that You release healing and restoration into the relationships that I unwittingly have helped to destroy, through the forces set in motion by my old Inner Vows.

Father, give me the freedom from the past that will allow me, with Your guidance, to reconstruct every relationship that must be renewed. If any repentance is necessary on my part, please show me the timing and the extent to which You would have me repent. I lay my mind, will, mind, emotions, soul and body at the foot of the Cross and await Your direction.

In Jesus' Name I pray. Amen.