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Part One: Understanding Bitter Root Judgments

I. Bitter root judgments

“See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.” Hebrews 12:15

“... judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment!” James 2:12-13

What does the Bible mean when it warns against judgment? There are two Greek words for judgment in the Bible, but they are both translated with the same English word.

1. “But he who is spiritual judges all things . . .”

I Corinthians 2:5. The word translated “judges” in this verse is anakrino in Greek which means to investigate.

2. “Judge not lest you be judged.” Matthew 7:1. The word “judge” here is the Greek word krino which means to put on trial or to condemn.

When we are wounded, especially when the wounding occurs in the womb and in our earliest years, we are likely to respond by making judgments. We judge (condemn) ourselves; God for making us or not protecting us; the person(s) who wounded us, and those who should have protected us.

We judge ourselves to be bad, ugly, unlovable, stupid, dirty, failures, boring, etc. We may reject the gift of life. We may choose death.

We judge God to be absent, uncaring, cruel, weak, etc.

We judge those who wound us to be evil, worthless, worthy of death, beyond redemption, etc.

We judge those who should have protected us as stupid, uncaring, weak, unloving worthy of punishment or so pathetic that they need our protection, etc.

We make these judgments and then forget we made them.

They then go underground into the soil of our unformed hearts and become roots from which grow fruit-bearing trees. At the proper season these trees bear fruit. No big deal, except that these roots are bitter and they bear bitter, destructive fruit.

For example when we marry, the forgotten anger we hold in our hearts toward our mothers or fathers may be triggered. That is, the tree bears fruit. Suddenly we despise the man or woman we thought we loved. Or, our spouse begins to treat us exactly like our parent treated us.

Have you experienced the phenomenon of sin habits that work in cycles? You may beat a sin habit into submission, believe you are done with it, and sometime later it resurfaces full force? This is because trees bear fruit in certain seasons. Unless the tree is rooted out, it will bear fruit. You cannot kill a tree by picking the fruit. This is why so many of us struggle so unsuccessfully with destructive behaviors.

A. **The Problem with Judging.**

A condemning judgment activates the following Universal Principle: How you judge will determine how you will be judged.

“Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. ... For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.” Luke 6:37-38

Universal Principle: If we sow judgment we will reap judgment. “Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked.

A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.” Galatians 6:7-8

Universal Principle: “There is only one Lawgiver and Judge.” James 4:12

Judging (condemning) sets you up as God with all the subsequent responsibilities of that position, not to mention that playing God is a major no no.

So does this mean we turn a blind eye to the truth? Of course not.

1. We are not to judge what God made (people), but we are free to judge their behavior. (investigate to determine if it is good or bad) “Who are you to judge someone else’s servant? To his own master he stands or falls.” Romans 14:4

2. **We are not to condemn ourselves. “Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.” Romans 8:1; Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price.” 1 Corinthians 6:20**

3. We are not to judge (condemn) God. "A man's own folly ruins his life, yet his heart rages against the Lord." Proverbs 19:3

But God does invite us to ask him questions and to reason with him. "Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord." Isaiah 1:18; "If any of you lack wisdom, he should ask God who gives generously to all without finding fault." James 1:5

B. Uncovering Bitter Roots

Setting aside the troubles that come from inheriting generational iniquities, a subject I will discuss in a future teaching, let's focus on how to uncover the bitter roots within ourselves.

It is very important to develop self-awareness. Begin by paying attention to the fruit in your life. Have you been divorced multiple times? That's a fruit. Does authority always mistreat you? Do you hate yourself?

Does everybody reject you? Do you fail at everything you try to do? Do you reject people before they reject you? Do you judge people before they judge you? Does everybody abandon you, disappoint you?

All these are bitter fruits that can be traced to early childhood roots. Do you struggle with believing that God loves and approves of you? Did your father love and approve of you? Are you only relating to God after you have done something to bring his disapproval down on you? Is acting bad the only way you could get your parents to pay attention to you?

Are you caught in a sinful behavior that you hate?

Perhaps you judged a parent for that same or a similar behavior and now you are doing the same thing. You are caught in the same trap.

C. Expectancy

Another clue to what is rooted in our hearts is our expectancies and fears. What do you expect or fear will happen? Have the same bad things happened to you so much that you have come to expect them?

Expecting certain bad things to happen is the result of certain bad things happening over and over. (It's hard not to say duh here.)

Here's the problem. When we have judgment in our hearts - for example, nobody loves me - then we tempt people to reject us. Other people actually feel like rejecting us. Our judgment against ourselves and others has the power to pull bad behavior out of another person.

Does that make you responsible for their sins against you? No. But it does help explain why the same bad things happen throughout our lives.

So examine what you expect to happen. Your expectancies reveal your bitter roots.

Do you expect to be rejected? Do you expect to fail?

Do you expect to be misused or unprotected by authority? Do you expect others to fail you? Do you expect your prayers to go unanswered? Do you expect to be alone, abused, sick, broke? What are your expectations? Ask God to help you identify them and track them back to their root causes.

Because roots are underground, they are hidden. But through listening prayer, God reveals to us the roots of our troubles.

“There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed or hidden that will not be made known.” Matthew 10:26

“Wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men’s hearts.” 1 Corinthians 4:5

in Part 2, I address the practical side of healing: How to Heal from Bitter Root Judgments.

Let’s pray:

Dear Creator God, Please turn the lights on. Reveal the bitter root judgments and hidden motives I have buried in my heart. Teach me to thoughtfully and truthfully examine myself, so that You may release healing into all that I am. I need to know what I truly believe deep within my heart, because it is not with my rational mind that I believe. It is with my heart (Romans 10:10). I ask that You will protect me from the trap of self-hatred by covering me with Your love and acceptance. Amen.

Part Two: How to Heal from Bitter Root Judgments

In Part One, I defined bitter root judgments as beliefs buried deeply within us and then forgotten.

“For the inward thought and the heart of a man are deep” Psalm 64:6 (NAS).

These beliefs were formed in response to pain when we were in the womb and as young children. They are the foundation upon which we build our lives. “... for with the heart a person believes ...” Romans 10:10. What we believe in our heart is how we perceive reality.

Here are a few examples of what people commonly believe.

1. About God. “God has abandoned me. He lied to me.

He sent me here to hurt me. He doesn’t like me.”

Possible judgment = God is bad and untrustworthy

2. About the self. “There must be something wrong with me. That’s why I feel this pain. That’s why they don’t want me.”

Possible judgment = I need to just go away. Or - No matter what I do, I’ll never be good enough.

3. About others. “Mother is weak. Father is bad.

Those in charge are incompetent.”

Possible judgment = I can’t trust anybody. I have to do it myself. There’s no help for me.

4. About life. “Life is too hard. Life is bad. I’m on my own.”

Possible judgment = I would be better off dead.

Not a very pretty picture, is it? Think about all of humanity trying to live life with their wounded hearts full of such pain-filled beliefs. No wonder we are hurt and angry.

If we stopped there with our bitter root judgments, we wouldn’t be so badly off. We could pray to God and He would reveal to us what we believed as children. We could ask for truth and He would give us truth. We could change our minds and everything would be ok. Except it’s not that easy. And here’s why.

A. Inner Vows

To protect ourselves from connecting with the pain of what we have believed, we made promises to ourselves. John and Paula Sandford call these promises Inner Vows. Often the very first inner vow we make is to “Never Feel The Pain Again.” So when we begin to ask God questions such as - Why can’t I get along with others? Why do I hate myself? Why can’t I hear Your voice? - we cannot connect with the reason. We are locked out by the promise we made to ourselves to “Never Visit That Pain Again.” During prayer, if we come close to that wounded place, we are thrust away by the inner vow.

Here's some examples of possible inner vows. They correspond to the list above.

1. I will never trust God again. I will never talk to God again. I will never listen to God again. I will never be vulnerable again.

2. I will be invisible. I will make them love me (by becoming the boy Daddy always wanted; by trying really hard; by being perfect; by never making a mistake, etc.) I will never let anyone close enough to hurt me like that again. I will be very good. I will show them.

3. I will never trust anybody again. I will take care of everybody. I will be better than them.

4. I will die. I will not be here. I will not be born. I will take care of myself.

Jesus warns us to "Simply let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No'; anything beyond this comes from the evil one." Matthew 5:37

B. The Enemy's Involvement

So how does the enemy become involved with our inner vows? Making a condemning judgment activities the law of judgment against us. That's bad enough, but taking an inner vow invites the enemy to get directly involved in helping us keep that inner vow.

When we say in our hearts, something like "I will never make a mistake again," the enemy "helps" us keep that promise. Here's a typical scenario taken from my life.

My father was abusive. Somehow, at the age of three, I was unaware that my older brother was the target of much of my father's inexplicable rage. One evening, my brother and I were eating together, waiting for our baby sitter to arrive. The folks were going out. We were eating pot pies and my 5-year old brother pointed out that the pies looked like poop. This was exquisitely funny to me. So funny that I wanted my daddy to share the joke, so I called my daddy. I didn't understand why my brother turned white and begged me not to call him.

My father came down the stairs and hurt my poor brother. Horrified, I hid behind a chair. My world was destroyed. Nothing would ever be the same again.

Here's what I believed: It Was All My Fault.

This was a defining event in my life. I have returned to it again and again for healing. But for the purposes of understanding judgments and inner vows, I want to pick out one that guided my life for many years.

Judgment: What I love gets hurt if I make a mistake.

Inner Vow: I will not EVER make another mistake.

Since the Lord designed us so that we will make mistakes and hopefully learn from them and mature, He was not going to help me keep my promise. But the enemy was more than happy to “help” me.

Here’s how it works. When we make an inner vow, we unknowingly give the enemy a legal right to “help” us keep our vow. “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

It is the enemy who condemns us. In my case, every time I made a mistake, an evil voice would punish me by speaking hateful words to me. I would listen and squirm in shame and self-hatred until I would resolve once again to “Never Make A Mistake.” And on and on it went with me becoming more damaged as I strove to protect myself from the pain of believing that “It Was All My Fault.”

Enemy spirits cannot give us life. When we make an inner vow, the only thing they can do is come alongside and punish us when we violate our vow. And they do.

Next week in Part Three, I will explain how to remove the legal rights given to the enemy through inner vows and how to break inner vows. Once this work is done, you will be better positioned to receive healing for the wounds caused by believing lies about God, yourself, others and life. Bless you.

Let’s pray.

Dearest Creator God, I bless You and worship You. You are so good. Please open our understanding so that we are able to know and accept what is hidden in our hearts. Our wounds are real and they hurt. Help us see what we have believed and why. Help us identify the promises we have made to ourselves in an effort to manage our pain. Set us free of bitter root judgments and inner vows. I ask in the name of our beautiful Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen

Part Three: How to Heal from Bitter Root Judgments: how they are formed, how they manifest, how they are discerned and how to clean ‘em up.

I’ve been pondering how best to describe healing bitter root judgments and vows and decided to use some examples that I have encountered within myself and within the people with whom I pray ... with their permission, of course.

This discussion is a little lengthy so I’m going to divide it into two parts. This first part addresses judgments: how they are formed, how they manifest, how they are discerned and how to clean ‘em up.

Most, if not all, judgments are accompanied by a subsequent inner vow. I’ll have to explain what I understand about inner vows in the next mailing, simply because of length. I wish it were not so, because judgments and vows go together ... like uh like handcuffs on a prisoner.

I. The Heart

First, a note about the human heart or subconscious, if you will. It has been my observation that the heart is emotional in nature and believes what it feels.

Also, the heart does not make the distinctions that the rational mind makes. The mind will reason that if one man is unkind that does not necessary mean that all men are unkind. Not so the heart. For example, if my father is mean, then my 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. It’s an all or nothing world to the heart, because the heart thinks in categories. So if the heart judges one man, the heart is, essentially, judging all males. This judgment will include God. Thus, one problem with bitter root judgments is they metastasize to include anything and everything the heart views as being in the same category. “... for with the heart a person believes ...” Romans 10:10

So, when searching for bitter root judgments, listen for words like these: All, everytime, everyone, never, always, nobody.

Here’s an example: I have an elderly family member who has been hurt badly by the menfolk. I don’t know all the details, but I do know that she has judged with condemnation those who have hurt her because of what comes out of her mouth. Here’s what she says: “All men are stupid.” She means it, too. Now, this lady has a son and several grandsons whom she loves.

Nevertheless, All Men Are Stupid. “For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart.” Matthew 12:34

II. The Formation of Bitter Roots

A. Circumstances

Example One. A baby girl is born severely allergic to many foods. It takes months of trying different formulas before one is found that does not produce burning diarrhea and vomiting. The only comfort this baby is able to enjoy is being held by her parents.

Otherwise, she cries. Over time, her exhausted parents begin to leave her to cry ... alone ... in unrelenting pain and hunger. Her sensitive spirit tunes into their frustration and anger. Her heart soaks up the emotions in the atmosphere.

Example Two. A little boy is left in the care of his teenage brothers while Dad works and Mom goes to school. The big brothers are annoyed by his tagging along. One of them punches and kicks the child. The other takes him into the woods and leaves him. They just want to get rid of their pesky little brother.

Oh. Did I mention that the little boy was his parents' last chance for a girl?

Example Three. An 8-year-old girl shops with her mother. She is looking for the perfect shoes. The child becomes so caught up in all the choices and wanting to find exactly the right shoes that she prolongs the shopping trip beyond her mother's patience. Her mother loses her temper and rages at the child who did not know she was doing anything wrong.

Example Four. Born on the farm and worked like a unpaid farm hand, this boy believes very early that his father values him based upon how much work he does. There is no time for after-school activities.

Dad decides what is watched on television, and vacations revolve around what Dad enjoys.

Example Five. The doctor warns this expectant mother not to bond with baby until after the first trimester is successfully completed. You see, she had miscarried her last baby during the first trimester. The mother obediently follows doctor's orders. When baby reaches out to her mother to bond, the mother rejects the bond. After the first trimester has passed, the mother reaches out to baby and baby rejects mother.

B. Resultant Beliefs and Bitter Root Judgments

A quick observation here: we form bitter roots as children so they are, quite naturally, childish. So look for what a child would believe in the circumstances.

Example One. The allergic baby formed the belief that she is just too much trouble. Her bitter root: Everyone would be better off without me.

Example Two. The pesky little brother already "felt" something was wrong with him because of his parents' deep desire for a girl. The abandonment he felt when his parents left him in the care of his older brothers reinforced his sense that he was not wanted. His bitter root: Everyone wants to get rid of me.

Example Three. This little girl was loved and wanted, but once before her mother had overreacted badly when her daughter had committed an innocent and childish mistake. At that time, the child had purposed in her heart to be a “good” little girl. But the shopping incident proved enough to shake the foundations of her being. She believed she should have known better, when it was impossible for her to have known at all. Her bitter root: I’m slow and stupid.

Example Four. This boy’s heart filled quickly with resentment towards his demanding and insensitive father. He believed his father did not care about him. His bitter root: It’s never ok for me to have fun.

Example Five. Believing herself spurned by her mother, baby protects herself from further hurt by rejecting mother. Her bitter root: I’m not wanted.

III. Discerning Judgments

A. What comes out of our mouths.

This is the first and easiest way to identify judgments We need to pray that the Lord will help us to pay attention to what we say and to what others are saying.

B. We can locate judgments by how we “feel” around a certain person or by how we feel in certain circumstances.

Again, this requires that we tune in to ourselves and to others. Feeling is a primary way of discerning. Never discard how you feel around a person or in a circumstance. Ask the Lord to take you to the cause of the feeling. Here’s an example. I’m a pretty talkative person. But, when I am around a certain man I know, I cannot push a word out beyond, “Hi. How are ya?” I go completely blank. I’ve asked within my circle of friends and nobody can think of a thing to say when they are around this guy. We all go blank. It is very weird. In all likelihood, this man has a bitter root judgment. Maybe, something like “No one wants to talk to me.” Guess what? We do want to talk to him, but we can’t think of a thing to say. That’s how much our bitter root judgments can affect other people’s behaviors. Pretty scary, uh?

C. Listening to what you are thinking is very helpful.

I learned in church to take every thought captive and to rejoice in the Lord always. I thought this meant I was supposed to push away bad thoughts and suppress bad feelings. I was wrong.

Here’s a better way. Listen to what you think and feel what you feel. Really feel those feelings and hear those thoughts. Then capture them by pulling the thoughts and feelings to you. Using your sanctified imagination, go before the Lord with your prisoners.

Ask Him questions. Say, “Look at what I caught.” The Lord will do the rest. Hebrew 4:16

D. Reoccurring memories,

Especially if they are painful, such memories are a pretty sure sign there is work to be done in the heart. I used to respond to painful memories by rebuking the devil. Now, I press into them. That was hard to do at first because, like most of us, I'm afraid of pain. But I learned to embrace my pain and invite Jesus into the memory.

E. How we react, or how others react, in a given situation also reveals the heart. See Mark 3:1-6.

Often God will lead us into circumstances that put us under pressure. The pressure will force to the surface what is in our hearts. God's purpose is not to embarrass us or cause us to despair. He wants us to know ourselves, so that we can repent and be healed.
Matthew 13:5

IV. Healing judgments

When we judge others, we are dooming ourselves, because we WILL do the things for which we have condemned others. For example, the boy raised on the farm grew into a man who could not have fun. He would anguish over playing his guitar or enjoying nature. He was cruel and harsh to his own self, reenacting his father's behavior, only directing it inward. See Matthew 7:1-2.

In order to escape the consequences of our judgments, we must acknowledge them and repent. Please consider using the following list of steps as a guideline.

A. Recognize that you have overstepped God's boundaries when you judged with condemnation. James 4:12

B. Say you're sorry for thinking you needed to do God's job for Him.

C. Ask the Lord to reveal to you how you have done the same thing.

The little girl whose mother was so impatient admitted that she herself had been impatient with her children. In this way, you will identify with the sinfulness of humanity. No one is better. All have sinned ... Romans 3:23. It is very healthy to accept your humanity in all its glory AND all its ugliness.

D. Say you're sorry for thinking you are better than others.

I realize this can be difficult when someone has abused you. I was abused, so I know. Here's how the Lord helped me. He asked me if I had, in any way, done something similar to what my abusers had done. I thought a bit, then had to admit that I had been cruel to others and to myself. So, in this way, I am like those who hurt me. I'm not better.

E. Release the debt/sin you are holding against yourself or the other person.

Say, I release this. I will not retain sin. See John 20:23. You may have to practice this. I just realized last night that I was empowering the enemy by holding onto my hurt over

how my mom picks at me about my appearance. I don't like it, but I'm not going to hold on to it.

"I let that go, Lord. Any evil being assigned to me, I send you to the feet of Jesus." HA! That shut up that annoying, critical voice that had been speaking in my thoughts!

F. Ask for the Lord to heal the hurt. The hurt is genuine and needs healing.

G. Ask the Lord to teach you new ways of thinking in this area.

Next week, I'll tackle Inner Vows. Let's get those handcuffs off. Bless you all. Let's pray.

Holy Creator God, You are wonderful always. I bless You and I bless Your people. Please teach us how to locate, repent and heal from all the judgments we made in response to the pain of life lived in a sinful world. Please train us and release us to bring this healing to others. Amen.

*The preceding material has been written by **Sue Bowman** and is being provided for educational purposes by *Living Well Counseling and Consulting, LLC*.*

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Locating and Breaking Inner Vows, Part 4

Inner vows are about keeping safe. They are a false and dangerous kind of protection. They are made in response to bitter root judgments and can take some pretty weird turns. The frightened and angry heart of a child can come up with some odd ways of protecting itself. So when looking for vows, you will need to ask the Lord to help you think outside of the box.

A. The First Inner Vow

Often the very first inner vow we make is to “**Never Feel The Pain Again or to Never Go There Again.**” So when you begin your search, I recommend that you do this: “Lord, I break the inner vow I took to Never Feel The Pain Again. I also break any other vow I took that keeps me from knowing what I need to know in order to heal. I send all evil spirits to the feet of Jesus for judgment.”

If the thought of doing this scares you, then you probably have that vow in place. Remember to pay attention to what you feel.

In most cases, this will deactivate the vow, remove any evil beings attached to the vow and make it possible for you to go to the root of the problem. The problem will be something you experienced or believed that was painful or frightening.

Now, for those of you who have DID or SRA with amnesia, the Lord knows if you are ready to go through this process. If you are not ready, then ask Him to get you ready.

I have found working with severely wounded people that the Lord tends to have us work on judgments and vows by tracking the presenting behavior, not the memory. Hopefully, this will become clearer as we go on here.

B. Subsequent Inner Vows

In Part 3, I listed five examples of bitter roots judgments. These are from the lives of real folks. Here they are again with the subsequent inner vows.

Example One. A baby girl is born severely allergic to many foods. It takes months of trying different formulas before one is found that does not produce burning diarrhea and vomiting. The only comfort this baby is able to enjoy is being held by her parents. Otherwise, she cries. Over time, her exhausted parents begin to leave her to cry ... alone ... in unrelenting pain and hunger. Her sensitive spirit tunes into their frustration and anger. Her heart soaks up the emotions in the atmosphere.

The allergic baby formed the belief that she is just too much trouble. Her bitter root: Everyone would be better off without me.

Inner Vow: I’ll do everyone a favor and go away.

Such an inner vow positioned this person to dissociate, which she did since she could not actually go away in the natural realm. Later abuse resulted in complex DID, but this

vow had already made it easy for her to “go away” by dissociating and dividing. It also makes it difficult for her to stay present when we do the work of prayer ministry. Renouncing this vow has been helpful ... BUT, here’s what’s even better. Repenting of this vow and sending the evil “helpers” to Jesus has allowed other related bitter roots to surface.

Here’s a related bitter root and vow: “It is inevitable that the ones I love will leave me.” (This includes God.) Now, pay attention to the inner vow she made in response. “Since this is inevitable, I will go ahead and make it happen.”

Just imagine how difficult such a vow makes it for people to love her and stick by her. AND the enemy was hugely empowered to beat me up as he “helped” her fulfill her vow to make her loved ones abandon her before they abandoned her.

It has to do with pain management. If she made it happen, then she could lie to herself about it. Lies such as, “I wanted her to leave anyway. I never liked her. I’m glad she’s gone.” That sort of thing.

She repented of protecting herself with the inner vow. I broke the vow by saying, “I break the promise you made to make your loved ones go away before they went away. I give the broken pieces to Jesus and send all evil “helpers” to His feet.”

She then repented of judging EVERYONE, including God, by believing that we would ALL leave her.

(The order of this prayer process is not important, by the way.)

Since then, the enemy hasn’t been hanging around me, trying to convince me to “abandon” her. What a relief. She still needs to learn healthier social skills and new ways of thinking, but now that the junk is removed, she CAN learn.

Example Two. A little boy is left in the care of his teenage brothers while Dad works and Mom goes to school. The big brothers are annoyed by his tagging along. One of them punches and kicks the child. The other takes him into the woods and leaves him. They just want to get rid of their pesky little brother. Oh. Did I mention that the little boy was his parents’ last chance for a girl?

The pesky little brother already “felt” something was wrong with him because of his parents’ deep desire for a girl. The abandonment he felt when his parents left him in the care of his older brothers reinforced his sense that he was not wanted. His bitter root: Everyone wants to get rid of me.

Inner Vow: Since this is going to happen anyway, I’ll make it happen.

This inner vow is very similar to Example One, but it played out a little differently. He would pick fights, say unforgivable things that would destroy relationships. Then he would be satisfied because what was going to happen had happened and he could relax. The woman in Example One manifested emotional neediness, eventually exhausting the people in her relationships. But, all in all, the vow is the same. I will make the worse thing happen before it happens. Go ahead. Get it over with, then I can relax.

Under all inner vows is miserable hopeless despair. The child KNOWS beyond a doubt that the bad thing WILL happen. It is inevitable.

The inner vow will fail, but she **MUST** try to protect herself from the pain that cannot be escaped. She must try to keep herself safe. Do you see how hopeless this is? Now, all of this is coming out of a child's heart. What the heart believes **IS OUR REALITY**. (Forgive the yelling. Just want ya'll to see that it does not matter what the rational truth is. What the heart believes is reality to that person.)

Example Three. An 8-year-old girl shops with her mother. She is looking for the perfect shoes. The child becomes so caught up in all the choices and wanting to find exactly the right shoes that she prolongs the shopping trip beyond her mother's patience. Her mother loses her temper and rages at the child who did not know she was doing anything wrong.

This little girl was loved and wanted, but once before her mother had overreacted badly when her daughter had committed an innocent and childish mistake. At that time, the child had purposed in her heart to be a "good" little girl. But the shopping incident proved enough to shake the foundations of her being. She believed she should have known better, when it was impossible for her to have known at all. Her bitter root: I'm slow and stupid.

Inner Vow: I can't be slow and stupid, so I won't be.

What is at stake here for this child? She believes that she will lose her mother's approval and love if she takes too long or doesn't know what to do. Since this child believes in her heart that she **IS** slow and stupid, here comes hopeless despair. And here come evil "helpers" who torment her whenever she does something that is not perfect or whenever she needs some time to make up her mind. This is serious stuff to this little girl.

We prayed like this: "Lord, forgive me for judging myself. You made me and I have no right to judge what You made. I break the promise I made to myself to not be slow and stupid. I send all evil "helpers" to the feet of Jesus. Lord, bring to death my old habits of thinking that I have to be perfect to be loved and accepted. Please teach me new ways of thinking."

Big breakthrough for this person who has been dishonored often. She stood up for herself the next time a lovely Christian women's prayer group treated her dishonorably.

Example Four. Born on the farm and worked like a unpaid farm hand, this boy believes very early that his father values him based upon how much work he does. There is no time for after-school activities. Dad decides what is watched on television, and vacations revolve around what Dad enjoys.

This boy's heart filled quickly with resentment towards his demanding and insensitive father. He believed his father did not care about him. His bitter root: It's never ok for me to have fun.

Inner Vow: I hate him so much, I'll get away from him and do whatever I want.

This boy protected himself by hating his dad. Partnering with hate is never a good idea, but we will often partner with hate and anger because those emotions make us feel strong. The first step is to break the vow to hate dad. Again, this is about protecting ourselves from pain. This child was hurt by his dad's insensitivity. Since there was no

way to escape his dad's tyranny, the boy decided to shield himself behind a barrier of hate. The enemy is now empowered to "help" the boy hate his dad AND empowered to "help" him do what he wants.

Once he left home for college, he was determined to do anything he wanted, but because of what his heart believed he was easily drawn into dangerous and illegal kinds of "fun." The interesting thing is that he defiantly informed his dad of his behaviors. Doing what he wanted cranked up the vow to hate his dad. Nevertheless, the young man felt terribly ashamed for having fun, because of what he believed in his heart. Of course, with the enemy's help, he was doing things he should be ashamed of.

His heart belief affected anything he perceived as fun. Even after becoming a Christian, he struggled with shame whenever he did something he enjoyed. He feared that Dad (God) would be mad at him. And he resented God in his heart.

Example Five. The doctor warns this expectant mother not to bond with baby until after the first trimester is successfully completed. You see, she had miscarried her last baby during the first trimester. The mother obediently follows doctor's orders. When baby reaches out to her mother to bond, the mother rejects the bond. After the first trimester has passed, the mother reaches out to baby and baby rejects mother.

Believing herself spurned by her mother, baby protects herself from further hurt by rejecting mother. Her bitter root: I'm not wanted.

Inner Vow: I won't want her or need her.

This is me, guys, so I'll just say that I never bonded with my poor mother. I didn't want to risk letting her close enough to hurt me again. So instead I resented her and believed that she hated me when she didn't. I was keeping myself safe from the pain of rejection by rejecting back. The evil "helpers" helped by putting a negative spin on anything that she said or did. I couldn't listen to her advice or accept her help. As you can imagine, this resulted in me trying to mother myself. What a disaster.

C. Clean Up

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?

For example, when I was a youngster, my mother took me to see an art professor who had expressed interest in my drawings. He was not in his office for our appointment, so we looked around while we waited for him. In one room he had hung a number of paintings that included nudes. These were not tasteful studies. They bordered on pornography. I felt very shocked and defiled.

I thought in my heart that the world is a disgusting place. I judged the world! Then I made a vow to have nothing to do with the world. I withdrew. By the time I was in my twenties, I rarely went out. I was terribly shy and socially backward. I was protecting myself by rejecting everything out there. As you can imagine, the enemy was delighted to "help" me isolate myself.

So inner vows are about keeping yourself safe. How are you keeping yourself safe?

1. We break inner vows by saying, “I break the vow I made to protect myself.”

You’ll have to fill in the specific vow. I don’t worry about doing it right. I figure it doesn’t hurt to break a vow I didn’t make or repent for a judgment I didn’t make. God knows that we see in part. I believe in sweeping with a big broom. Just clean up an area until you get a release from the Lord. Bitter root judgments tend to be in clusters, so you may work in one area for a long time before getting it all. It’s a process.

2. I give the pieces of the broken vow to Jesus by saying, “I give the pieces of this broken vow to You, Lord.”

3. Send all evil “helpers” to the feet of Jesus.

I say something like this: “I send all evil “helpers” to the feet of Jesus. I renounce your help. I ask You, Lord, to help me.”

4. Ask the Lord to bring your bad thinking and behaving habits to death.

Ask Him to build new healthy and holy ways into you. This is very, very important. After you are set free, you must learn to BE free. That will take some time. Remember that you do not walk alone. Our good Jesus walks with you and He will teach you. I suggest you read John Sandford’s *The Renewal of the Mind*.

Let’s pray: Heavenly Creator God, I ask that You would strengthen us as we do the work of discovering our hearts. Please bring our judgments and vows into the light. Please guide us as we repent and break the promises we made to keep ourselves safe. You alone are our safe place. Make it safe for us to do this work. In Jesus’ name. Amen.