

Choosing Not to be Bitter

In August 1984, a Texas A&M University military cadet was roused from bed and forced to perform “motivational exercise” until he collapsed and died, despite a memorandum ordering a halt to such hazing.

Results of an autopsy showed Bruce Goodrich, 20, of Webster, New York, died of heat stroke.

Goodrich and his roommate, John McIntosh, were awakened at 2:30 a.m. by three juniors in their unit and then put through nearly an hour of running, push-ups and sit-ups in 77-degree temperature and 79 percent humidity. When Goodrich was taken to St. Joseph Hospital in nearby Bryan, his heart had stopped and his body temperature was 104 degrees. He died later that day.

A grand jury indicted four students (the fourth for tampering with evidence in the investigation).

How would the parents of Goodrich react? You might be surprised. His father didn't excuse the cruel injustice of what happened to his son, but he said: “I would like to take this opportunity to express the appreciation of my family for the great outpouring of concern and sympathy from Texas A&M University and the community over the loss of our son, Bruce. We harbor no ill will. He is now secure in his celestial home.

“When the question is asked, ‘Why did this happen?’ perhaps one answer will be, ‘So that many will consider where they will spend eternity.’”

Goodrich's family chose not to be bitter. That word is defined by Merriam-Webster as a *deep-seated ill will*.

Instead, they chose a different path. Trusting in the sovereignty of God can turn outrage into compassion and hatred into concern.

No tragedy is beyond God's sovereignty, or supreme power. Let that be an encouragement to you when you face the difficulties of life.

Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you (Ephesians 4:31-32 ESV).

– Beecher Hunter