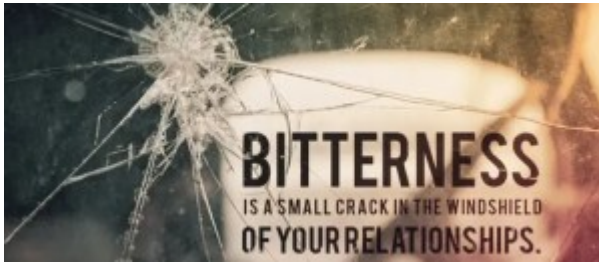


Hurt and Bitterness—By Bill Gothard



William W. Gothard Jr. (born November 2, 1934) is an American Christian minister, speaker, and writer, and the founder of the Institute in Basic Life Principles (IBLP), an independent fundamentalist Christian organization. His conservative teachings encourage Bible memorization, large families, homeschooling, aversion to debt, familial patriarchy, the submission of wives to husbands, and modest attire. At the height of Gothard's popularity during the 1970s, his Basic Youth Conflicts seminar was regularly filling auditoriums throughout the United States and beyond with attendance figures as large as ten thousand and more for a one-week seminar. (from Wikipedia)

I attended Bill Gothard's Basic Youth Conflicts seminar when I served in the USAF when stationed in Sacramento, CA., circa 1972. I probably didn't get as much out of it as I should have because I felt I was forced to attend the seminar by the Navigator leadership, the non-denominational Christian fellowship that led me to Christ. I didn't always agree with what Bill Gothard was teaching. I was deceived then by Pentecostal pastors who told me I didn't need to study the Bible as much as the Navigators told me to study it or memorize so many Scriptures as the Navigators encouraged me to memorize. The Pentecostals told me all I needed was the infilling of the Holy Spirit. This supposed shortcut to spirituality was in *direct contradiction* to what the Navigators were telling me, namely, there is no shortcut! I rejected the Navigator's view of how to grow spiritually the time, but guess what? After a couple of decades of the school of hard knocks, I learned the Navigators and Bill Gothard were right. It was only through decades of Bible study, Scripture memorization, listening to the right people, experience, and guidance of the Holy Spirit that I came to know I know today.

The Scripture that comes to mind about this subject is what Jesus told His disciples.

It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: *the words* that I speak unto you, *they are spirit*, and they are life. – John 6:63

The Lord blessed Bill Gothard with good health. At the time of this post, he's 89 years old.

Hurt has got to be one of our major problems today. You can get hurt so badly that you cut yourself off from feeling altogether. I've met girls who've

said, "Hey, I've been hurt too many times. I'm never going to love anybody again. Forget it." So you get hard and cynical. That's one way people deal with pain—they just withdraw themselves so that they won't be hurt again. But when you come to Jesus, God heals your heart and He takes the cynicism out of your life. You can once again open your heart to others and love again.

Even Christians can get hurt. It's not wrong to be hurt, but the way you deal with your hurt makes all the difference in the World. Being hurt is a big enough problem in itself, but if that hurt is not handled in the right way, bitterness will set in. In the end it is bitterness, not "being hurt," that will destroy you.

RECOGNIZING BITTERNESS

It is really not that complicated to recognize bitterness. Let's think of some of the characteristics of an extremely bitter person:

1. They show a lack of concern for others. A bitter person cares very little about anybody else.
2. They're sensitive and touchy. For instance, if a bitter person walks into a room where two other people are talking, and those people get quieter as he walks in, the bitter person thinks, "They're talking about me."
3. They become very possessive with just a few friends, and rarely ever have any really close friends. They also have an unnatural fear of losing their friends.
4. They tend to avoid meeting new people.
5. They show little or no gratitude at all.
6. They will usually speak words of empty flattery or harsh criticism.
7. They hold grudges against people, often for a long time. They find it extremely difficult to forgive.
8. They often have a stubborn or sulking attitude.
9. They are usually unwilling to share or help anybody.
10. They end up experiencing mood extremes—very high and happy one minute, and the next thing you know, they're so low they can reach up and touch bottom.

(Editor's note: Although these symptoms often indicate bitteresses, they can also result from other causes as well.)

BITTERNESS: THE SEED OF HELL

One of the bad things about bitterness is that it doesn't stop. It keeps getting worse. It may only start as a little seed of hurt, but then it grows and festers into a very dangerous thing. Many people can be hurt by one person's bitterness. (See Heb.12:15 .)

THE "FILING CABINET OF YOUR MIND"

In bitterness, you focus on what that "horrible person" has done to you. You make a filing cabinet with their name on it, saying, "Rotten Things This Person Has Done To Me." Now this is a big filing cabinet, and every time that person does even the smallest thing that hurts or bothers you, you file it in

with the rest of the hurts. Usually we have more than one filing cabinet.

One of the causes of continual or persistent bitterness is that we try to balance out the guilt with blame. We say, "Well, I'm wrong, but they're worse. I have a good reason to be bitter. You don't know what they did to me!" That's how we try to ease our conscience.

Many people use bitterness for revenge. That's why we hold on to it sometimes. "I'll show you, and you're really going to be sorry." But who is sorry first? You're the one who's killing yourself! You are not only hurt spiritually and emotionally, but physically as well. Bitterness and resentment often bring on all sorts of medical problems, such as ulcers and high blood pressure. People who carry deep bitterness around can't even enjoy a great meal. They sit down to eat, but all they can think of is the person who hurt them—they might as well be eating cardboard.

GETTING OUT OF THE BITTERNESS TRAP

The Lord's Prayer says, "God, You forgive me the way I forgive others." The thing that causes hurt to develop into bitterness is failing to respond to the help God can give at that time of being hurt. To forgive someone doesn't mean pretending you're not hurt. That isn't Christianity—that's insanity. You need to be honest with yourself and admit that you've really been hurt. But how do we overcome our hurts? Here are some basic steps.

Pray, and ask God to forgive you for your bitterness and unforgiving spirit. This is not a complicated thing, but it may be costly. You may need a bit of time on your own. Take time to actually write a list of how you have hurt God and others, and let the Lord break you. Ask God's forgiveness for these things one by one.—And when you get finished, take the list and rip it up. It's a good feeling. Burn it if you like.

Destroy your files. Remember that list of things that others have done to hurt you? Open the filing cabinets of your mind, take out all the files, and get rid of them. Tear up your list and burn it. You must release it all to God. Forgiveness is opening the filing cabinet before God and clearing the debts. "I'm not going to hold this against them anymore. I'm not even going to keep a record of it." No record. That's what God does with you. Do you want Him to remember and recall all the debts He has cleared you of? Of course not, so you do the same. The Bible says, "For if you forgive men for their transgressions, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions."—Mat.6:14,15 . It's a choice you must make in response to God's offer of forgiveness to you. What will you do?