

“I’m Bored”

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It does not take very long in the day before one of my kids declares, “I’m bored!” For parents, this is one of the most aggravating expressions they routinely hear from their kids. Our kids have all kinds of things to entertain them. We do all sorts of activities to have fun with them. Yet, nearly every day, they protest, “I’m bored!”

Unfortunately, boredom does not end in childhood. Adults experience boredom. For us, boredom stems from the unrelenting routine of life. We do the same things every day. When anyone asks my cousin about what he’s been up to, he always says the same thing: “eat, sleep, and work.”

Solomon wrote, “What does man gain by all the toil at which he toils under the sun? A generation goes, and a generation comes, but the earth remains forever. The sun rises, and the sun goes down, and hastens to the place where it rises” (Eccl. 1:3-5). A routine life is nothing new.

About Boredom

1. Boredom is a sense of emptiness. This is what Solomon was expressing. He spent his life seeking fulfillment through many worthy endeavors. Yet, he used the word “vanity” to describe the results of his efforts. Nothing he did satisfied his longings.

Someone once defined boredom as “*a tame longing without any particular object.*” This term characterizes someone who knows they need something, but they do not know what they need or how they can obtain what they don’t know.

2. Boredom is an expression of selfishness. Parents give their children good gifts. There is no reason for children to feel discontent, yet they often do. They have no perspective. Being dissatisfied with their toys, they want more. Of course, we recognize that more will not make them happy. Since someone has always taken care of them, children are self-centered. Parents work to correct this and bring a broader perspective to their children’s self-centeredness. Yet, as adults, we continue to struggle with selfishness.

Boredom is about “I” and “me.” *I’m not happy. I don’t have enough. I want more. You need to give me what I want. You need to entertain me.* By His example, Jesus seeks to correct our selfishness.

3. Boredom leads to harmful outcomes. When children become bored, they will complain and be disruptive. They will ruin a nice day. As adults, boredom will cause us to complain and be disruptive. Boredom will cause spouses to ignore one another or commit adultery. Boredom can lead to a wasted life.

Dealing with Boredom

1. Learn our purpose. While we do always express this statement, this is what we are trying to teach our children. We are trying to teach them about their purpose in life. Once we learn and accept our purpose, we can begin taking steps toward fulfilling our purpose.

We do not have to live with *a tame longing without any particular object*. We have a Creator. He has made us in His image. He has created us to fill the earth with His glory by doing good works. Solomon eventually learned this critical truth. He summed up the purpose of man at the end of his writing: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil" (Eccl. 12:13-14 KJV). Fearing God and keeping His commands is not vanity. This is how we can experience a full life.

2. Develop gratitude. We are inundated with God's blessings. James wrote, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures" (Jas. 1:17-18). Regrettably, this has caused us to come to expect His grace. Entitlement fosters boredom and discontent. If we are growing in the likeness of God, we will grow in our gratitude for God's gifts.

3. Do good works. If boredom is a sign of selfishness, then we must take steps to repent of our selfishness. Rather than focus on ourselves, we must focus on the well-being of other people. Paul wrote, "Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others" (Phil. 2:3-4).

Serving the needs of others is partly how we fulfill our purpose. Service is how we exemplify the self-giving love of Christ. This is how we can gain influence for Christ in the world. Our lives will become worthwhile. Paul reminded the elders from Ephesus of the emphasis Jesus placed on service: "In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive'" (Acts 20:35).

Conclusion

Boredom is a state of mind that we all must confront. It is a subtle way the devil gains influence in our hearts. If we are thoughtless, boredom will rob us and those around us of energy and joy.

If you are bored, please know that God made us to have meaningful lives. He has given us purpose and direction. Through Jesus, God has shown us our objective in life. Paul wrote, "For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves

but for him who for their sake died and was raised" (2 Cor. 5:14-15). We must look away from ourselves and towards the cross. Then, we can begin to have a full life of serving others.