

BORED TO LIFE
JUNE 7, 1987

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Boredom is our number one social disease, according to Sam Keen, who wrote a book about it. If you've been wondering what's wrong with you lately, if you've been wondering what's wrong with our society, perhaps it is boredom! With all the technological diversions provided for us today, from television to computers to video games to electronic music, boredom should be as rare as tuberculosis! But, Judson Gooding also says we are bored. In his article, "How to Cope With Boredom," he wrote:

Despite its extraordinary variety of diversions and resources; its frenzy for spectacles and its feverish pursuit of entertainment, AMERICA IS BORED. The abundance of efforts made in the United States to counter boredom have defeated themselves, and boredom has become the disease of our time.

All sorts of antidotes to boredom have been tried--drugs, booze, find another lover, change spouses, join a cult, watch TV like a zombie, invade the refrigerator, attempt to fill each waking minute with hurrying and scurrying. Are we afraid to be bored? Are we bored of life? Is it because we are bored of life that we flirt with war in central America and now in the Persian Gulf? As a nation, are we choosing death because we are bored?

Rather than be bored of life, let's be bored to life. Let's use boredom as an occasion--an opportunity--to embrace life, to be creative, to be open to the Holy Spirit. We all need times of boredom. There is a place in our lives for boredom. Let yourself be bored. Boredom provides balance. Life is not lived on one high level of excitement. The philosopher Nietzsche said no one can stand more than three days of happiness in a row. Nothing would be exciting if life was at a fever pitch all the time. We need rest, as well as zest. All great lives have contained uninteresting stretches. All great books contain boring portions. Even sermons are sometimes boring! A boy noticed a bronze plaque in a church narthex and asked, "What are all those names up there?" An usher replied, "Those are the names of people who died in the service." The boy asked, "The 9:30 service or the 11:00?"

Boredom is a necessary part of life. Let your children be bored. It is not the responsibility of parents to entertain their children! It is not necessary to fill every minute of a child's life with activities, lessons, sports, movies, TV, and parties. When a child says, "I'm bored. There's nothing to do," don't be manipulated, but say, "I'm sure you can find something interesting to do." Let the child be creative. Perhaps some of the youths who get into trouble did not learn as children how to handle boredom.

The philosopher Bertrand Russell wrote in *The Conquest of Happiness*,

A life too full of excitement is an exhausting life, in which continually stronger stimuli are needed to give the thrill that has come to be thought an essential part of pleasure. A certain power of enduring boredom is therefore essential to a happy life...A generation that cannot endure boredom will be a generation of little people.

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You can endure boredom by using it as an occasion to embrace life. Be bored to life, rather than bored of life. Today we celebrate Pentecost. The day began in boredom. For the last fifty days, since Easter, the disciples had floundered. They lacked direction. They experienced a few high moments when the resurrected Christ appeared in their midst. But now they weren't sure what they were to do. On Pentecost they had gathered again in the upper room where they had eaten the last supper with Jesus. They were in a state of psychic doldrums. And then it happened. A sound came from heaven like the rush of a mighty wind. It filled the room. The psychic energy was so vivid, so astounding and so powerful, there appeared tongues of fire over their heads. They began to speak in tongues, and they were sent out, dispatched, into the crowds where they began sharing their joy, power and message. Three thousand were converted to Christ that day and the church was born.

Notice how they handled their boredom, and let it be a lesson to all of us. Rather than deny boredom, or be afraid of it, and try to drown boredom in activities which are less than productive, accept your boredom. The disciples accepted their boredom and waited. They waited on the Lord and, most importantly, Acts 1:14, "with one accord they devoted themselves to prayer." When you are bored, relax, pray, and let yourself be open to God. How can God fill you with the Holy Spirit when you fill your every minute with stuff? Be open to God. Reflect on the words used in the worship service this morning: Christ overpowers. Christ now reigns. Christ commands. Reflect on the mystery of our faith (mystery meaning wonder): Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again. How can you be bored for long when you read, reflect, and allow such words to live within you?

Later in today's service, when you pray, "Pour out your Holy Spirit on us," and when you take communion, empty yourself, wait on the Lord, get out of the way, and let it happen.

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