

*I pray this is not boring. It's my latest article I wrote for our paper. I put my heart and soul in it. Pray it is a blessing.*

## **The Sin of Boredom by Clark Slone**

"I'm bored." We've all heard this. We've all probably said it. But I believe the 11th commandment should read, "thou shalt not be bored!"

Boredom is a state of impatience; a kind of anxiety that leads to motivations and actions that are uncommon to our nature. We live in a time when people are trying to escape boredom at all costs through drugs, alcohol, technology, entertainment, sinful immoral activity, and a myriad of other diversions. Society today is passionately trying to escape boredom, and Satan is using this to destroy and kill. This is true even in the church.

In visiting our team in the Philippines many years ago, I was met by brother Allen who said he wanted me to go with him to some islands where they had evangelized. We rode all night on a noisy, smoke belching "Pantranco Liner" bus. We rode with pigs and chickens, not to mention twice as many people as are legally allowed on one bus! As we sat on the un-cushioned, solid wood benches, the bus hit one pot hole after another all night long. I was convinced there were no shock absorbers, and every pot hole made my spine feel like it was being beaten from the bottom up. But at least it helped me take my mind off all the animals and exotic odors floating through the air.

After transversing a massive jungle region for eight straight hours, my back was killing me, but arriving at our destination of Naga City alive was itself a reason for joy. The next morning we rented a jeep and rode another four hours to San Pasqual where we hitched a ride on an outrigger "banca" boat for the Island of Burias. On the boat I felt it was the same pigs and chickens from the bus that were riding with me again for another half day.

The dolphins were jumping all around us and I asked if there were sharks in the area. I only received big smiles in return. Finally we arrived at the Burias Islands. After taking a rice-laden boat a little while longer we arrived at our destination. It was like paradise. Palm trees, white sand, and a tribe of Filipino island dwellers. They were very kind and took me to the main "tribal" leader. We talked and he shared how they loved and appreciated brother Al and Joe Grier who had brought the gospel to them.

After talking for a while I noticed there was no more rice boat. The mayor said it had left us. I asked when it was returning, and he said he didn't know. I thought, "Well, this isn't so bad. Being trapped in an island Paradise." The mayor gave us a real island "hut" to sleep in. When I looked for the bathroom he said I could just do my business out the window, since it would just be washed into the sea. I thought, "Wow. This is great. I'm going to love this place!"

We arranged to have a meeting that night to preach to the tribe. I felt like a real jungle missionary. During the day we would sleep under the palm trees and do a little fishing. The islanders worked in the morning for a few hours cutting copra (coconut meat). Then we all just swam and layed in the sun. There was no electricity and really nothing else but fish and rice. I got to know the mayors teen-age son Dustine. I told him he lived in Paradise. He responded, "What? I wish I could escape to the west! It's a hell here! Every day its the same coconuts, fish, and rice! Day after unending day!" I thought that was a strange response until the days passed by for me.

I would go out in the morning and look for that rice boat. Eventually, even Paradise can be boring. I told Al that a man could go crazy just sitting under palm trees all day. I got so bored I started dreaming about coffee and noise. I could see what Dustin was saying! When the boat finally arrived I ran to the beach like Robinson Crusoe ready to leave "Paradise" with all my heart! Boredom can be a terrible thing even in an earthly Paradise.

God did not create us to find paradise in this life. Anything outside of His inner presence and consuming love will not fill the lonely void in our inner man. Even though we may think we can find something satisfying, there is none outside of walking in the garden in the presence of God!

While visiting some churches in the States a dear brother invited me to his fellowship. It was impressive to say the least. We had about an hour of praise, led by very professional singers. One of the male tenors put Pavarotti to shame! There was country, classical, and some other forms of music I couldn't even identify. Then a brother came forward and told some Christian jokes that put us all to laughing for another fifteen minutes. Then the pastor came out and preached up a storm for fifteen minutes. He had murdered a man before his conversion. He was liberated from prison by a miracle. The message was to the point and kept us all on our toes as he elaborated on his past and what he had done in prison. I thought to myself, I am not going to argue with this brother about doctrine or anything else!

To finish up, another brother entered the stage dressed to kill, and prayed with a voice that seemed straight from the Book of Revelation! Then these huge doors opened in the back like massive garage doors. Over a thousand of us exited in a moment under advice not come to the second meeting in order to give others a chance. When the last of us was out the door, it shut with a quick clang, and I could see (at the other end of the sidewalk) a massive amount of people filing in for the second service.

My dear brother turned to me and asked, "How do you feel?"

I said, "Well... I feel good."

"Don't you feel great! Do you feel like you have been to church!"

I didn't know what he was wanting me to say and I hesitated.

"I bet you weren't bored, eh?"

"Oh, no. I was excited through the whole thing," I replied.

"And you will like the Wednesday night meeting even more! I've already bought you a ticket."

"A ticket?" I asked.

"Yes. A ticket. Part of the church is turned into a five star restaurant on Wednesdays (with matradi's and sparkling white grape juice), and there is always a big Christian show while you eat, with some good praise and worship to work your appetite up. You won't be bored there either!"

He seemed quite preoccupied with the fear that anyone would be bored at the church service. As I would soon learn, the entire service plan revolving around entertainment, and the casting out of the demon of boredom in a church service.

It seems we are live in a day where society is more and more bored. And yet, no matter how we run to and fro, trying to fill a void inside that we may not even know is there... we fail. Even in church people are bored!

People are bored with their jobs. Their marriages. With all the toys they have accumulated (like cars, trucks, boats, electronics, and big houses). There is a real suffering in the church and society in general. Boredom itself is one of the major causes of suicide. Many people are just so bored they do not want to live! Fox News medical report says that boredom is a major cause of illness, aging, depression, divorce and suicide in America. You would think in our modern age of computers, TV, movies, sport and every immoral activity imaginable there would be no time for boredom in our modern lives!

Boredom is simply a lack of satisfaction with the life we possess. If we are in Christ we need to ask ourselves some serious questions about where we are at with God, and motivates us on a daily basis in our personal and spiritual activities.

What will we do as Christians to escape boredom? What is the answer to multitudes leaving traditional boring Church services? What is causing people at any cost to break the cycle of boredom with extreme sports, pornography, endless games, and multiple sex partners; and who, yet, after it all still find themselves full of anxiety, empty, lonely, and "bored to death?"

Hollywood has to keep producing movies that are more exciting, more violent, and with ever deeper immorality; where, if something does not blow up every 60 seconds it loses our attention. And this has become the norm. A movie that just has a good message is harder and harder to find these days, because it's just too boring. Our need for being entertained, and our passion for diversion will continue to become more intense as a society as we get closer to the end of time. And this principle is entering into the church also.

A child approaches me and says, "Boy am I bored!" Is that normal? Of course as we understand a child hasn't developed the ability yet to understand that the world wasn't created for his entertainment and as a child he is selfish. But as adults, especially Christian adults, we should have the maturity to understand that this life is for us being constantly a pleasing aroma to the Lord. Living like this we find fullness, and there is no reason for us to be thinking of self. Jesus was never bored precisely because He was constantly consumed with the priority of His Father.

One of the signs of the end times is that men's hearts will fail and they will be running to and fro in frantic movement. After a week of labor people feel they can't waste their weekend being bored! They think they have earned a night out on the town or some movement to seek fun and excitement. Most deaths are at these times of escaping boredom. For the unregenerate heart there are no limits to expense or boundaries of sin when it comes to satisfying this need to escape boredom. As believers we should take heart and not follow the sinful inclination and desires of the flesh to combat boredom.

One Christian brother who is a funeral director said he was sorry he couldn't come to the tent very often. He said that he was at his busiest time of the year. He went on to explain that he had a special license to send dead German tourists back home. He explained that they were so bored all year long in their jobs that when they come to Italy they want to party day and night to make the most of their short vacation. They find out the hard way they are just too old (though some were not that old) to concentrate their time drinking, partying, fornicating, dancing, and over eating. As the only funeral director in this town, he was overloaded with work. The result of this fight against boredom is seen in the devil sending multitudes of souls to hell. And because of what? They actually killed them selves with the future fear of boredom when they returned home. Even the fear of perceived future boredom can be deadly.

Many times anxiety accompanies boredom as our mind is opened to attacks of fear, depression, and fear of possible future events that could happen to us. Our mind should always be full of the presence of God and His ministering Spirit. But this takes more discipline than looking for some unedifying diversion. Many seek dealing with boredom by numbing their mind with TV programs that only deaden the soul. Much sin is born out of boredom, and we need to be aware of the seriousness of this and it's effects on our souls.

Do you think Adam and Eve were ever bored before the fall? God has allowed us to experience this great divine void. He allows this for good reason. People try to fill that void with relationships, activity, entertainment, food, alcohol, drugs and a myriad of other diversions. Some of it is innocent and some of it is defiling to the very marrow of our souls. We feel an emptiness in this void and ask, frustratingly, why. It is because we were made by God to be filled with His holy presence. Just as Adam and Eve walked with God in the evening and communed with him in an intimate way. Boredom was never an issue until sin arrived! God wants for us and from us that intimate fellowship. Until we do this we will find our self bored, eventually, with any person, object or activity. But never with true communion with God!

Gods all consuming presence can be so great that it will make us sensitive to His creation and what He is. The most simple of things as a beautiful tree, sunset or blue sky with cotton clouds on a sunny day can fill us and we can enjoy the satisfaction of our inner man feeling complete and whole with God.

Do you think we will be bored in the next life with Jesus? Or that we will eventually get tired of the city of God and the new earth? And why not? It seems everything in this life, no matter how pleasurable or beautiful, gets old and we get bored, but this will not be the case on the new earth and in the new Jerusalem. There will be beauty beyond any imagination, and it will be progressively more so for all of eternity. Because that is the way God is! We will be able to communicate with our restored bodies in a way as never before. The most boring brother or sister we have ever known will be eternally interesting to talk to! Love will literally be exciting all the time as true love will be the norm... always. Imagine when people fall in love now. They are consumed with emotion and everything is so beautiful. Just the thought of their love excites them and they can spend hours talking to and thinking of the love of their life. In eternity we will experience this always with everyone and in everything. The most powerful of this experience will be with our bridegroom Jesus, the lover of our soul. Boredom will be a thing of the past, never to return.

We will also have work that will occupy us, but it will be a joyous and eternally fulfilling work. Just as Adam had responsibilities in the first garden, we will have in the second. There will be no boredom or fatigue, and constant joy in all we accomplish.

Randy Alcorn, author of "Heaven," says that we probably will even be able to communicate with the animals of the kingdom. That would sure kill a lot of boredom! (I talk to my dog sometimes, but he doesn't ever respond. Maybe in the Kingdom that won't be a problem!). This whole thing about a joy-filled heaven is not a fantasy brethren, but a reality greater than anything we presently know. And I can't wait!

In hell on the other hand, there will be boredom beyond anything we have ever experienced here in this world. Many say, "Oh yeah, but all my friends will be there!" That may be true enough, but they will not be able to give you company. Though a multitude inhabits hell, it will be a lonely place, because God is not there and the boredom will be the most painful of any sentiment known in our lifetime.

One of Hollywood's most renowned actors of the late fifties, highly popular in cowboy and mystery movies, had well published affairs with the most famous actresses of the day. He was loved by America and Hollywood, and sought after in all parts of society to attend big events and large parties. Of all people you would think he would have no reason for boredom, depression and loneliness. But he was all of that, and more, and he tried to fill his emptiness with alcohol. Here is this man who was engulfed in what seemed like a sea of friends, and yet he died a tragic death. His body was found in his luxury apartment after falling in a drunken stupor, and hitting his head on the corner of a table. But what's worse, is that he had been dead for over a month! And even then was found only by a cleaning lady! No one even knew he was gone, because he lived a life of open sin and secret boredom, loneliness and depression. That is what sin does.

Being old and alone is a fear multitudes face as they enter the sunset years of their life. In youth there is the possibility of frantic movement in consuming diversions that seem to never end. Sports, gyms, clubs and games of every sort can temporarily fill the void. Even work and endless trivial tasks can take our mind off our self for a while, just so the feeling of emptiness and boredom can be put aside. But as old age approaches and our bodies decline physically and mentally, and our energy and coordination wane, we simply do not have the stamina to follow endless tasks and routines. Like death itself, we can try to protect our self from old age; but ultimately old man time catches up with us all.

Boredom and depression plague the old in a particular way. I spoke to an old gentleman who was retired. He said that he was so bored, and came to tears as he spoke. He was at one time a valiant soldier who traveled the world in one conflict after the other. He could hold me spellbound with his stories of war battles and a soldier's life. He was once an avid hunter and an outdoors-man who had hunted the largest and most frightening of game for excitement. A number of times he nearly lost his life, but was saved at the last minute by a well placed shot from his gun. Or just from running through a swamp to evade a wild animal. And now, here he was before me bored to the point of tears! His body no longer reacted and gave him strength to follow his adventures. He explained how now he sat in front of the TV for eight hours a day! He spoke openly of suicide to get out of his terrible life of boredom. And this is the fruit of a man who spent his life living for himself and his pleasures and desires.

The end results are a life of monotony as a true life in the spirit and walking with the Lord has been ignored and put aside. Only in walking, talking and communing with God can we escape this sad end to our earthly life.

I was in an old-folks home with a man who wanted to escape. He cried as he said it was worse than prison, and he was bored to the point of death even though he was taken care of in the highest manner. But in the same home I visited a room with an old gentleman who had a Bible in front of him and a smile from one part of his face to the other! He was known as one who loved the Lord and was a great testimony in the house. He radiated joy and even in such circumstances and sickness was consumed by the presence of the Lord. This is the way to win over boredom in any facet of our life.

I have asked many why they smoke. Is it so enjoyable one would kill himself to practice this most deadly of habits? Many have stated they do it for company, and when they are alone it helps their boredom. They call it a friend and it helps deal with a life that seems to follow always the same circle. This is a deadly fruit of boredom.

Some take prescription drugs to numb their mind. Others use illegal drugs to occupy their inner man. Time magazine wrote an article about an Ivy League high school in San Francisco that issued prescription drugs to their students on a daily basis to help them deal with the trauma of boredom in the classroom. When asked how many students they served, they responded one hundred percent! There is no end to what we will do to appease our inner man from boredom.

We may feel well if we work hard and long enough, as though we had conquered this issue. The more bored we get, the longer we occupy ourselves with work. But it doesn't work. A recent survey indicates that the majority of laborers suffer boredom the most on their jobs.

We will all have some moments of boredom in life. The real issue is to what extent however. It does not have to be a problem in our existence as men and women of God.

If we do recognize this as an issue that is causing problems spiritually or physiologically we need to address it right away. Make it a habit to fill your free moments not in pointless thoughts that bear bad fruit, but in fervent prayer thanking and praising God for all He is. Meditate on eternity and the great blessings God has in store for us with Him. Look into the Word and let it saturate you. Study what God said about heaven, the new Jerusalem and the new earth. And meditate on the fact it will not be long before you see the beautiful kingdom of God and this life will only be a far memory. Fill your boring moments with God. Make it a daily exercise and see how beautifully it works. Discipline is the secret.

God knows your days and how long it will be before you are with Him in His eternal and wonderful presence. Time is short and there is no time to be bored as we know the greatest and most interesting personality in the universe will soon be our bride. What a day that will be!

BROTHER CLARK