

Booooooring

Boredom's Not Ho-Hum. It's What We Make of It

By Stephen Gabriel

By now my kids have learned not to complain to me about being bored. They know what my response will be. "Oh, you're bored! Well, let's see, the kitchen floor needs to be washed. The lawn could be mowed. Would you like to vacuum the living-room carpet?" Somehow, they always seem to find something interesting to do rather than undertake the remedies I propose.

It turns out that they are frequently bored out of laziness. They could have called a friend, read a book or worked on a project or hobby, but they didn't have the get-up-and-go to begin.

The Self-Inflicted Variety

Adults are not immune to such fits of lethargy. We can be possessed by an inertia that prevents us from getting to first base in terms of productive activity.

Around the house a common cure for boredom is to tune in to the "boob tube." If we considered how much time is wasted in front of the TV because we didn't take the initiative to read a good book, pursue a worthwhile hobby or go on an outing with the family, we would be truly appalled.

By planning ahead, we can minimize such downtime when we just don't have anything to do. We can make a plan for the weekend, or the week, for that matter. The plan will include chores, reading, activities with the family and doing some corporal work of mercy, such as visiting the sick. It should also include some time devoted to prayer. The point is, we needn't be bored at home. There is plenty we can do that is worthwhile and interesting, if we put our mind to it.

Evading the Boring Situation

There are times, however, when boredom is imposed on us by our circumstances. For example, we may be sick in bed. Or we may find ourselves waiting in line or in a waiting room for a long time. Even at work, we may have a task we find uninteresting or one that has long periods of slack time when business is slow. These potentially boring situations can usually be anticipated. When we see boredom lurking around the corner, that's the time to be proactive and take evasive action. Bring a book or your rosary beads!

If we find ourselves in a boring situation at work, we need to be creative. If the work we do is uninteresting but will keep us occupied, we need to focus on doing the work extraordinarily well. This work, like all work, can be offered to Our Lord as a prayer. Give this work a supernatural dimension, offering it up for that friend who is having such a rough time right now, and it will take on a value that surpasses that of the most sophisticated scientific endeavor done for merely human motives.

If we are experiencing a slow time on the job where there is a cyclical lull in activity and little work to do, we need to seize the opportunity to be creative. Maybe we can help someone else with his job or look ahead to the time when activity will pick up and prepare ourselves and our employer for that busy time in the future.

Yielding Supernatural Fruit

Sometimes we just have to live with a boring situation. But, as Christians, we can't allow ourselves to be held hostage by boredom. We must try to convert this difficult time into a fruitful period in our lives. In these circumstances the fruit will be supernatural. By offering Our Lord this suffering and struggling to stay in the presence of God, we can do great good that no one will see.

We must constantly remind ourselves that this time on Earth is not ours to waste. Our time is truly a treasure. It is given to us by God to use well in His service. We will have to answer to God for every minute of our lives. And we must live each minute like someone who is madly in love. St. Josemaria Escrivá reminds us that "it is precisely those who are in love who pay attention to details, even when they're doing apparently unimportant things." If we live our lives like great lovers – lovers of our Father God, we will struggle to use our time well, even the time that would otherwise be considered *booooooring*.

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