

# Men and Their Emotions: Boredom

As I begin to conclude this series about how a man manages his emotions, I'm realizing that Boredom is possibly the most controllable and manageable. When men are bored, we often get ourselves into trouble, which diverts us from pursuing our primary goal of becoming more like Jesus Christ.

As I researched for this post, I was reminded of two truths: one biblical and one from a famous theologian and philosopher.

The first truth comes from the Bible. After creating the earth and then creating Adam, God then gave him Eve to provide some much-needed accountability. "The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. (Genesis 2:18) because God knew humanity would make bad decisions.

The second truth comes from Søren Kierkegaard (1813 – 1855), the Danish philosopher, theologian, poet, social critic, religious author, and existentialist philosopher who argued that this impulse to escape the present by keeping ourselves busy is our greatest source of unhappiness. When we are bored, our true and evil self comes through.



Boredom is the root of all evil - the despairing refusal to be oneself.

(Søren Kierkegaard)

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Neither of these truths are good for us as men.

## Boredom Defined

The words bored and lonely or alone have different meanings.

en·nui

/än'wē/

*noun*

a feeling of listlessness and dissatisfaction arising from a lack of occupation or excitement.

*synonyms:* boredom, tedium, listlessness, lethargy, lassitude, languor, weariness, enervation;  
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Boredom or “ennui” is the emotional or physical state one experiences due to lack of mental stimulation, activities to do, or interest in one’s surroundings. It is a listlessness or dissatisfaction when you have had enough of something and need more of something else.

Being bored is simply having nothing to entertain yourself with, and generally just feeling empty or dull, often with a desire to do something entertaining.

Loneliness, on the other hand, is a negative state of mind, where a person is not sure of themselves, is not able to cope with the emotions around them, does not wish to talk to themselves so they require a distraction. It comes from when someone feels left out or that no one understands them. It is when someone feels that they are not enough and needs someone other than himself.

The two feelings may overlap because you feel bored when you are lonely. You may also feel lonely because you are bored, especially around dull people with whom you cannot relate and converse.

## **Environmental and Physiological Reaction to Boredom**

The feelings of bored and lonely can be quite similar to one another. The difference comes mainly from where the feeling stems.

In his book, *Boredom: A Lively History* (public library), scholar Peter Toohey argues that boredom is an emotion that can actually help your emotional state: *"Boredom is, in the Darwinian sense, an adaptive emotion. Its purpose, that is, may be designed to help one flourish."*

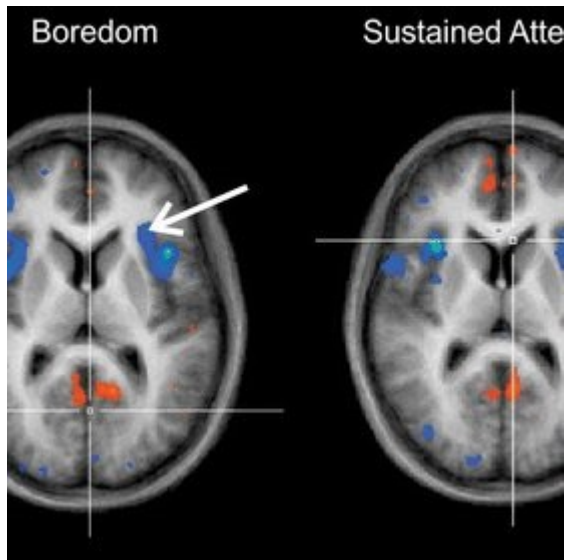


Image from ResearchGate

A Scientific American article, *Bored to Death: Chronically Bored People Exhibit Higher Risk-Taking Behavior*, states the emotion of boredom also plays a role in how satisfied we are with our lives.

Easily bored people are at higher risk for depression, anxiety, drug addiction, alcoholism, and compulsive gambling, eating disorders, hostility, anger, poor social skills, bad grades, and low work performance. As Kierkegaard remarked, boredom is such a strong force that all kinds of evil things come out of our boredom.

Men, generally, also get bored more than women. To cope, we tend to exhibit more risk-taking behaviors, pursue more dangerous forms of entertainment, and are more likely to say that our environments are dull.

Our boredom reveals much about us both as individuals and as a culture.

Part of the puzzle of boredom is how much excitement and novelty we actually require. This seems odd in today's age of on-demand stimulation from TV, movies, the internet, and video games but highly bored individuals tend to lack the ability to entertain themselves.

Bored people also tend to score low on measures of self-awareness. They find it difficult to accurately monitor their own moods and feelings and hence understand what they truly want. They repress their true wants and desires and therefore cannot locate the satisfying activity.

Many experts claim that the feeling of loneliness may stem from our childhood and our interactions with family. Children who were not close to their parents are said to have feelings of being lonely more often, as compared to children that were close to their parents.

The reality is everyone faces loneliness one time or the other in their lives. The trick is not to let it overwhelm you. Boredom is a feeling that should pass and not be dwelled upon, which can make you feel anxious and depressed.

## **What the Bible says about Boredom**

Since boredom often results from a lack of mental stimulation, activities to do, or outside interests, we must first reconcile that life is not an action movie and we all suffer times of boredom and loneliness.

So while experiencing boredom is not a sin, there are some

reminders in the Bible about attitudes and choices that arise from our boredom that can be harmful to our pursuit of godliness.

- Proverbs 19:15 speaks of how “slothfulness” can lead to unpleasant circumstances. This means that we must strive to live with passion and purpose to overcome our boredom. If we are bored because we are lazy, apathetic or passive, we are being slothful. We are being a “sluggard”.
  
- First Timothy 5:13 speaks of how idleness leads to sinful activities like being a gossip or busybody. Yet 2 Corinthians 5:17 tells us that “if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.” We can choose not to sin and live in a God-honoring manner so boredom does not direct our lives.
  
- Satan also seeks out the bored man who lacks motivation since it prevents him from pursuing God’s will. Do not allow the enemy to take a foothold through your boredom. “Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour” (1 Peter 5:8).
  
- Combating boredom can be a challenge sometimes. The apostle Paul staved off boredom with hard work in order to help the weak and supply the needs of the ministry (Acts 20:34–35). In Athens, when Paul had some “downtime” while waiting for Timothy and Silas, he never got bored—he preached to whoever would listen (Acts 17:16–17).

- When you find yourself with nothing to do, emulate Jesus' example by serving others. "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45).

## **How God Buddies Respond to Boredom**

American moral and social philosopher, Eric Hoffer once wrote that men get bored with their lives and themselves:

*"When people are bored, it is primarily with their own selves that they are bored."*

*—Eric Hoffer (1902 – 1983)*

My belief is that to offset boredom, man needs to stay busy.

Now, I don't mean crazy, overworked, stressed-out busy, but busy as in having enough things to do to fill our time.

I know for me personally, when I have too much free time or am alone for long periods of time, I get bored and can lean away from being a man of God.

Also, for men especially, a mid-life crisis comes out of boredom. We lose motivation when we are bored at work. Problems in our relationships come from boredom. We seek other ways of excitement and stimulation when we become bored with life. Boredom is unhealthy or ungodly in many ways.

Talking through your boredom with a God Buddy can help you refocus on getting through this tough stage of life. You can also refoicus your priorities.

Neuroscientist, Deb Knobelman describes three steps to take to get yourself out of the boredom of mid-life:



1. Change your priorities, not just your circumstances.
2. Don't "Used-to Your Life Away."
3. Find a new "Why".

God Buddies should make their "Why" about serving others since it is known to increase happiness.

We should also get outside often for adventure to burn off our excess masculine energy. There is nothing better for our emotional state than some recreation like golfing, bike riding, camping, or just walking in the woods.

Simply put, when you are bored, get out and do something with



a God Buddy rather than sit around doing nothing.

Next week, I will conclude this series with a summary of all the emotions that we must learn to manage better to become godly men.