



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of
the Southern United States

The Monthly Message
to the Priests' Wives
May 2015

The War of Boredom

Boredom is one of the negative feelings that affect man with different degrees in his daily life. Although it is a normal feeling that almost everyone experiences at some time in his life, yet it may turn into a fierce psycho-spiritual war waged by the devil against God's servants including the priest and his wife to make them lose their enthusiasm and vitality in service. Thus the performance becomes weak and the good quality is lost in service.

Boredom is defined by psychologists to be a negative feeling engendered by one's inability to connect with his environment. It is an

unengaged mind in the work, activity or atmosphere where the person is present. There are some stages of life that are characteristic with a higher degree of boredom like adolescence, midlife and geriatric stages.

Causes of boredom

(1) Causes related to the person himself: some personality traits make one more predisposed than others to feel bored. Examples of these traits are high degree of energy and activity – intense need of arousal and innovation – high degree of adventure and risk seeking – high degree of creativity – high degree of intelligence. All these traits make one rapid in his rhythm, hate routine and love continuous innovation.

On the contrary one may feel insecure and afraid of people. He then decides to stay in isolation in his comfort zone that is characterized by mannerism and routine. This

person tends to limit and even amputate his external relationships in order to protect himself from the unknown. He then ends up at feeling bored and annoyed.

(2) Causes related to the environment: the degree of boredom increases when the nature of the person's environment, activity or work one performs are monotonous, routine and void of any arousal.

(3) Psychological stress: when one is subjected to psychological stress his tolerance becomes less and he easily loses his patience. This makes him more vulnerable to boredom.

(4) Mismatching between the person and the work or activity he performs: the person may have neither enthusiasm nor interest in the type of activity required from him. This activity can also be incompatible with one's abilities. If these abilities are either higher or lower than the

prerequisites of the required activity then he will feel bored in both cases.

(5) Lack of meaning: when one cannot find meaning in his existence in general or in a specific activity that is required from him then he rapidly feels bored. One's awareness of his mission makes him enthusiastic to fulfill it and protects him from boredom.

Signs of boredom

Boredom can manifest itself in one of two ways:

(1) Loss of enthusiasm and motivation and this in turn breeds lethargy and lassitude.

(2) Agitation and nervousness seen on one's body language in the form of fidgeting, rubbing hands, tapping feet, clicking fingers, to and fro movement ... etc.

Usually the bored person oscillates between the above two states. He sometimes feels

lethargic and tends to have retarded activity and some other times he becomes agitated and hyperactive.

Destructive ways to overcome boredom:

(1) Turning to external environment to seek a new stimulus through, for example, shopping – eating – chatting on phone – Chatting on facebook – playing electronic games – watching TV – cigarette smoking – alcohol and drug abuse – addicting sex – indulgence in emotional affairs ... and such similar compensatory destructive behaviors that are usually addictive with unsatisfactory temporary relief of boredom. It is not also void of sins that burden one's conscience with guilt feeling.

(2) Turning to internal environment where the person seeks stimulation within himself. This is clearly manifested in indulgence in day dreams and fantasies. A student who feels bored during

the class indulges in day dreams in order to overcome boredom.

(3) Escaping the boring situation that usually happens through excessive sleep.

Boredom and priest's wife

Priest's wife is subjected, like any other person, to variable degrees of boredom in daily life. Nevertheless, Satan can wage war against her through a chronic state of boredom that depletes her energy and makes her lukewarm, fatigued and exhausted. The devil can get use of the specific nature and circumstances of priest's wife to duplicate this war. The numerous preoccupations and responsibilities, severe psychological stress, tight time, routine rough activities and tasks and scarcity of entertainment in the life of the priest's wife make her more vulnerable to chronic boredom. Also the personality of the priest's wife or feeling that the

role required from her exceeds her abilities may add to her feeling of boredom and ennui.

Many times, priest's wife seems to be saying with King Solomon, *"One generation passes away and another generation comes; but the earth abides forever. The sun also rises and the sun goes down and hastens to the place where it arose. The wind goes toward the south and turns around to the north; the wind whirls about continually and comes again on its circuit ... That which has been is what will be. That which is done is what will be done and there is nothing new under the sun. Is there anything of which it may be said, "See, this is new"? It has already been in ancient times before us" (Ecclesiastes 1:4-10).*

How can priest's wife overcome the war of boredom

(1) Vertical expansion and not horizontal one meaning to go deeper and not to go outside in order to look for stimuli. Many times the Holy Spirit wants to increase our depth in our spiritual journey. Here boredom becomes a tool that the Holy Spirit uses to warn us saying, *"You have dwelt long enough at this mountain"* (Deuteronomy 1:6).

(2) Boredom is closely associated with lack of concentration. Thus in order for a priest's wife to overcome boredom she must keep her vigilance, attention and presence in whatever she does in general and in reading the Holy Bible and praying in specific, *"What is the conclusion then? I will pray with the spirit and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit and I will also sing with the understanding"* (1Corinthians 14:15).

(3) Priest's wife must not insist on remaining within the boundaries of her comfort zone as a way to guarantee her safety and her family's. Remaining within the comfort zone leads to stunted growth, destroys vitality and gives fake safety.

(4) Avoiding indulgence in compensatory behaviors like overeating – shopping – chatting ... etc. These behaviors usually aggravate the problem instead of solving it as it adds guilt feeling and addictive enslavement to the boredom.

(5) Priest's wife must acknowledge her humanity and the limitation of her energy. Exaggeration in being involved in a lot of tasks and activities out of enthusiasm, zeal or exaggerated guilt feeling may end up with burn out syndrome where priest's wife loses all her vitality, energy and performance. She may end up at the opposite to what she desires, *"Do not be overly righteous, nor*

be overly wise: Why should you destroy yourself?" (Ecclesiastes 7:16).

(6) Priest and his entire family must take care of taking periods of retreats, rest and entertainment as they help in restoring energy, activity and vitality.

(7) It is helpful to meditate on the following verses from the Holy Bible, *"The everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth neither faints nor is weary"* (Isaiah 40:28); *"His compassions fail not. They are new every morning"* (Lamentations 3: 22-23); *"The goodness of God endures continually"* (Psalms 52:1); *"Oh, sing to the Lord a new song!"* (Psalms 96:1).