THE GOSPEL MESSAGE

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BE STILL

Brad Tutterow

In 2014, researchers from the University of Virginia and Harvard asked volunteers to sit alone in an empty room for 6 to 15 minutes. Participants were instructed to simply sit and think. No phone, no books, no magazines, no television, just an empty room. The goal was simply to stay entertained by their own thoughts.

The twist? A button in the room could be pressed at any time to give a mild but unpleasant shock. All the participants had experienced the shock before, all agreed it was negative, and some even agreed they would pay money not to experience the shock again.

Yet 67% of men and 25% of women chose to shock themselves rather than be alone with their own thoughts. The study concluded that most people find it difficult to entertain themselves, noting that "*the untutored mind does not enjoy being alone with itself.*" Most participants found physical pain preferable to boredom.

Scientists call the part of our brain that activates when we are bored the Default Mode Network. It is used for self-reflection, emotional processing, and mental exploration. And most of us don't like it.

The modern remedy for boredom is to reach for a smartphone to fill empty moments. We reach for our phones in line, at children's sporting events, stopped at traffic lights, and during commercial breaks. At the merest hint that we're going to be alone with our own thoughts, we try to cut off the boredom before it starts.

Americans pick up their phone between 100 and 200 times a day. Most people check something on their phone within ten minutes of waking up. We've invented the perfect device to eliminate boredom and avoid self-reflection, emotional processing, and mental exploration.

But studies show that boredom is good for us! Boredom is associated with creativity and altruism. Bored brains start planning for the future. And boredom is essential for goal setting and long-term planning.

And this is what we find in Scripture. The Bible speaks to us on the virtue of being still, waiting, meditating, finding desolate places, taking a break, and finding thinking time.

Our connected culture has given us the benefit and the curse of taking the world with us everywhere. We walk in the park with headphones, browse the web on airplanes, take laptops into coffee shops, and use satellite internet to stay connected when hunting and fishing. Disconnect for a bit and enjoy a desolate place.

When David was in the Wilderness of Judea, he wrote, "*when I remember you upon my bed, and meditate on you in the watches of the night*" (**Psalm 63:6**). David was awake at night and thinking of the Lord. Either he couldn't sleep, or he was intentionally staying awake to think and to meditate on the Lord.

The life of a shepherd comes with long periods of inactivity. From David's writing, we get a sense that he used this time to think on the Lord. In **Psalm 19**, "*the heavens declare the glory of*

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God." In **Psalm 8**, "*when I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers.*" In **Psalm 4**, "*ponder in your own hearts on your beds, and be silent.*"

We read that Jesus often withdrew to a desolate place. The benefit of a desolate place is the lack of distractions. Jesus actively sought opportunities to be alone with his own thoughts. "*But he would withdraw to desolate places and pray*" (**Luke 5:16**). Create a desolate place for yourself by putting your phone in the other room so you can spend time reading, praying, or meditating.

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The worst part about trying to avoid boredom by distracting ourselves is that it doesn't work. Constantly pulling out a phone to eliminate boredom decreases our tolerance for boredom. This makes previously interesting tasks feel boring by comparison, which drives us back to the phone.

From the journal Addictive Behaviors: "When college students feel unfocused, they often reach for their phones for relief, which actually tends to leave them feeling even more detached the following day. These findings suggest that breaking this loop requires actively replacing screen time with meaningful offline activities."

A summary from the Cleveland Clinic concludes that digital Sabbaths (putting the phone away for one day a week) are linked to deeper thinking, better sleep, better mental health, and stronger relationships.

The psalmist writes, "*Be still, and know that I am God*" (**Psalm 46:10**). The Hebrew word here means to relax your grip. It means to put down whatever is in your hand, to relax, to stop. It means not doing anything. The stillness is first, and then we know God.

It's possible that Satan is encouraging distraction culture because he knows that we need stillness to know God. If we keep distracting ourselves, trying to eliminate any hint of boredom, we rob ourselves of the opportunity to be still and know God.

Find a way to spend time being still and meditating on the Lord. Make a desolate place for yourself, free from distractions, and think about the Lord like David did when he was working as a shepherd.

The Lord is good to those who wait for Him, To the soul who seeks Him. 26 It is good that one should hope and wait quietly For the salvation of the Lord. (**Lamentations 3:25-26**).

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Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.

Colossians 3:2-3

CHANGE

Dan Huff

We live in an ever-changing world. Some changes can be good and helpful; other changes may seem perplexing, bringing discomfort. Change is a part of life. As I grow older, things are changing. Our bodies are aging and don't always respond or function the way they used to when we were younger. The nucleus of the local family unit begins to change as children mature.

To a certain degree, God has designed change into His creation. From conception to birth, through childhood to adulthood. Change allows and gives us tools for growth and development, and, God willing, along the way, we are maturing. However, this process can be difficult as we go through the various transitions and seasons of life.

Change can shake our life to its core. Sometimes change can bring fear, producing anxiety.

What do we fear? Fear of the unknown. Fear of our inabilities, fear of "what ifs"? We may not know what the future holds, but we do and can know Who holds the future!

"Know": not just head knowledge, but a relationship built on faith and trust—a commitment.

Where can a soul find a sure foundation that they may stand upon without the fear of falling, and when they do fall, a hand to get back up? An anchor in the storm-tossed seas of life that will never fail?

This is the reason it is paramount that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever (**Hebrews 13:8).** What does it mean? How can I apply the promise that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever? It is a description of His very nature, His authority, and His Power—nothing is too difficult or beyond His purpose. He is reigning in Heaven today, has the same convictions, same plan, and goal—salvation of souls. He has the same attitude toward us through His grace—our eternal good. He has the same love for us. He never deviates. He is unmoved, unchangeable, and undefeated. You can depend on Him! Can He depend on you?

God's immutable plan never changes. It is centered and grounded in His Son, **John 3:16-17,** *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved."*

You are very precious and valuable to God. This verse tells of the greatest love that shall never wane, from the greatest Giver, and the most valuable gift ever given. With this is the power to live (**Romans 6:17-18, Galatians 2:20, 2 Corinthians 8:9**). The blood of Christ shall never lose its potency, shall never weaken. There is transforming power in the blood!

The truth never changes: sin is still sin and needs to be acknowledged, repented of, and washed, forgiven in the precious blood of Christ. Terms of pardon and salvation in Jesus have not changed. The same gospel taught on the Day of Pentecost will still save the erring sinner (**Acts 2**)!

The Bible, with its commandments and promises from an infinite, omnipotent, and sovereign God, never grows antiquated. God's word is just as true, powerful, useful, and valuable when applied to one's life appropriately today (**Hebrews 4:12, 2 Timothy 3:16-17**) as it ever has been. Jesus said, *"Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away"* (**Matthew 24:35**).

Jesus' words, just as the Father's, are truth (**John 17:17**) and are forever settled in heaven (**Psalm 119:89**). We can place our trust and confidence in His words. Whatever He says, He will do.

The Church's design and purpose never change. The Church is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets; Jesus Christ is the Chief Cornerstone (**Ephesians 2:20ff**). It has been bought with the precious blood of Jesus (**Acts 20:28**); this will never change. The Church is the kingdom which Daniel spoke of; the God of heaven would set it up, and it would never be destroyed, nor left to other people, for it would stand forever (**Daniel 2:44**). The Church's destiny is eternal glory—whether I am a part of that glory, God out of His great love has left the choice up to me, and you. He desires you and me and whosoever will may come answering His call of salvation in obedient faith (**2 Thessalonians 2:14, Hebrews 5:7-9**).

If you are struggling, turn to Him. Joel told Judah, *"So rend your heart, and not your garments; Return to the LORD your God, For He is gracious and merciful, Slow to anger, and of great kindness; And He relents from doing harm"* (**Joel 2:13**).

Don't build your life on the shifting sands; they are deceptive. This world cannot provide what you need and crave. Jesus spoke of a man who deeply contemplated his life; he made a plan, then he labored, giving his all—digging deep, laying his foundation on THE Rock, building his life on Christ. So when the rain, torrents of change, burst out against his life, it could not shake or destroy it, for it was founded on THE Rock (**Luke 6:46-49**).

Paul did this, and nearing the close of his life on earth, Paul could boldly say, *"...I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day"* (**2 Timothy 1:12b**). What had Paul committed to the LORD? Everything, including his very life! It is about having the right and proper relationship with the LORD! When that relationship is fed, protected, and nurtured, it will allow us to have the proper perspective as we move forward with Him.

"*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever"* **Hebrews 13:8**

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Blessed Are the Dead

Brother **Jerry Weichelt** of the Kirksville, MO congregation passed away on June 13, 2026. Jerry served the congregation faithfully as a deacon for many years. He and his loving wife, Lisa, were blessed with four children and five grandchildren. May the God of peace grant his family peace and courage.

Here and There

There was great rejoicing at the Midwest Bible Campout as three souls were immersed into Jesus Christ. We pray the Lord will bless **Ryder Rinkenbaugh, Mary Reis,** and **Camilla Walker** as they continue serving him faithfully.

Sister **Kim Anderson**, formerly of the Fenton church of Christ shared that the congregation has several books (some musty), Red Sacred Selections Hymnals, and bibles with which they would like to part. You can reach out to her directly at 1 (314) 808-3801 for further information.

Let all those who seek You rejoice and be glad in You; let such as love Your salvation say continually, 'The Lord be Magnified!'

Psalm 40:16

Special Meetings

2026

July 18.....Family VBS, Old Lamine, Rural Blackwater, MO
July 26-31.....One-Week Meeting, Riverside Rd, Ozark, MO
August 23.....White Oak, MO
September 5-7.....Pleasant Hill, IA
October 2-4.....Fall Campout, Unionville, MO

Additional details for these and other upcoming meetings can be found by visitiong the Gospel Message website. You can use the QR code below to navigate to the relavent page.

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