

Fran & Jesus on the Job: Bored with Job

Presented by Mary Lowman

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Day One

Do you ever get bored with your job? Boredom is a common problem we all face. Our friend Fran deals with boredom on her job. In case you're not familiar with this series, this is a fictional story of a woman who is learning to practice the presence of Jesus on her job.

It's Tuesday afternoon, and Fran is sitting at her desk looking at the clock. "Three o'clock; wow, has this been a long day. I am ready to go home. In fact, I'm ready for the weekend, and it's only Tuesday. How am I going to make it to Friday?" She says out loud to herself.

She realizes she hasn't had much energy in the past few days. She feels a bit guilty, but she can rationalize it to herself. "I'm just tired of the same old routine, you know," she tells herself. "I guess I'm ready for a new job. I think I've got this one down pat, and there's no challenge in it for me."

That quiet voice of Jesus says to her, "So, you feel you've done all you can do with this job? No new ground to break, no room for improvement?" Coming to understand Jesus is aware of her every word and thought still catches her by surprise at times, but as she is learning to practice the presence of Jesus, she is more and more aware of his reaction to her words and thoughts.

She responds, "Well, I guess there's always room for improvement, but I've been here a few years now. Yeah—I think I'm ready for bigger things."

Jesus says, "Have you noticed your attitude in the last few days and weeks? Can you see your work habits have deteriorated a bit, maybe because of your attitude?" That's a little hard for Fran to own up to quite yet.

She says, "I don't think I've been that bad. I'm still getting my work done."

"Yes," Jesus says, "but are you working with excellence; are you doing it with all your might?" Jesus reminds her of a familiar verse from Ecclesiastes 9:10.

Fran says, "Lord, I do more work on a bad day than most of my coworkers do on a good day." Jesus replies, "So, by comparing yourself with others, you can justify your lack of doing your best, is that what you're telling me, Fran?"

Fran is not sure how to answer him, so she shifts in her seat and starts to shuffle papers.

Boredom. It can certainly lead to some poor work habits and keep us from being our best, can't it?

Day Two

Our friend Fran is finding it a little difficult to go to work because she's feeling very bored and unchallenged. Do you ever have that problem? I sure have. Jesus made Fran aware that boredom can lead to some sloppy work habits.

The day finally ends and Fran heads home. After dinner the phone rings and it's her friend Laura, who is a teacher. They chat for a minute, and Fran says to her, "Laura, you've been teaching for eight or nine years, right? Do you ever just get tired of teaching—you know, just plain bored?"

"Yeah, sure," Laura says. "Lots of days."

"You do? But why do you stay in teaching if you're bored with it?" Fran asks.

"Oh, Fran, I've learned to distinguish between boring days and periods and being bored with my job. You see, I really believe God has called me to teach, and I believe I can have a godly impact in the lives of my students. But that doesn't mean I don't feel bored sometimes," Laura explains.

"Well," Fran replies, "how can you do a good job teaching when you feel bored?"

"The key word there, Fran, is 'feel.' I feel bored, but I can't let my feelings control my actions. As long as I take the paycheck that comes with the job, I owe these students the best teacher I can be," Laura answers.

Fran feels convicted as she listens to Laura. "You're right, Laura, I know, but lately I've just been so bored with my job I simply haven't worked very hard. I know I'm not doing my best work—and Jesus knows it, too."

"That's a lousy feeling, isn't it?" Laura agrees. "I know; I've been there."

"Well, how do you make yourself do a good job even when you're bored?" Fran asks, sincerely wanting some help with her problem.

"Fran, this is going to sound crazy, but I just talk to myself and say, 'Now, Laura, today you are not a teacher, you are an actress. And you must play the most convincing role ever. You must act like a great teacher today.' I go into a mental gear-shift and I see myself as an actress on a stage who must play the role of a teacher. Does that make any sense to you, Fran?" Laura asks.

"Yeah, kinda," Fran muses. "A mental gear-shift, huh?"

"Well, it's just my way of getting myself out of that boredom rut," Laura says. "Then I discover the boredom usually goes away pretty fast once I begin my acting role." Laura laughs.

As Fran crawls into bed that night, she prays, "Lord, will you please give me a mental gear-shift like Laura has, so I don't succumb to boredom. Thanks, Lord," and with that she goes to sleep.

Day Three

How do you battle boredom on the job? That's what our friend, Fran, is trying to figure out. After a few years in her job, she just feels unchallenged and—well—bored. And that is affecting her work habits, not to mention her attitude. Maybe you've had the same problem.

Last night she talked with her friend, Laura, who is a teacher, and Laura explained on the days she feels bored, she uses a mental gear-shift technique and tells herself to act the role of a great teacher, like an actress on stage. In that way, she motivates herself to do a good job of teaching even on days when she really doesn't want to.

As she arrives at work today, Fran is still thinking about Laura's mental gear-shift idea. "Wonder what I could come up with that would help me?" she thinks to herself.

Jesus reminds her of the sermon she heard recently on her thought life. "Your Pastor said you have to bring your thoughts into captivity. Maybe your mental gear-shift idea could be a good technique to help you do this. Obviously if you don't think you're bored, you won't be, right?"

But that seems too simple to Fran. "Well, I don't know. After all, this boredom also has something to do with the repetitiveness of the job, how long I've been doing it, and the fact that I would like to try to do other things," Fran replies. "I mean, you can't just think yourself out of being bored, can you?"

"Well," Jesus says, "maybe yes, maybe no, but don't you think you need to address the immediate problem of your deteriorating work habits?"

"You're right, Lord," she responds. "I know I have to give it my best whether I'm bored or not. So, my first challenge is to not let these feelings of boredom cause me to give less than my best effort here on my job," Fran says.

"Why don't you seek some good advice?" Jesus prompts her. She remembers that familiar verse in Proverbs 13:10, which says *wisdom is found in those who take advice*.

"Good idea. I'll do that," Fran agrees.

Day Four

Fran is struggling with boredom with her job. She is unmotivated to work hard or give it her best effort because it's become routine and unchallenging—and she's bored. Her first challenge is to tackle the slippage of her work habits; that is never right for any reason. She's aware she must do good work regardless of how bored she may feel.

Now, she wants to seek some advice to find out if this is just a boring period she will pass through, or if she's truly bored with her job. "I think I'll talk to my Bible study leader, Nancy," Fran decides. "She's bound to have been through this in her own career." She gives Nancy a call and they make a date to have lunch on Saturday. But it's only Wednesday, and Saturday seems a long way off. When you're bored, time just drags, so now Fran must find a way to motivate herself through the rest of the week.

Fran asks herself, "What can I do to make myself think correctly so these feelings of boredom don't keep me from doing good work? I need to think of a creative approach to what I'm doing now," Fran reasons, "like doing it differently..." She begins to think about this as she looks at a proposal that needs to be done for one of her clients. "How could I do that proposal differently?"

Her creative juices start to flow, and instead of doing it in the same format as she always has, Fran comes up with a new approach. She calls her friend, Andy, in the art department, and gets a little help from him, and before she knows it, she's into this project with enthusiasm.

At the end of the day, she has her proposal almost completed, but it doesn't look like any other proposal she's ever done. Her friend, Louise, walks into her office as she's finishing, and she shows her the proposal.

"Wow, Fran, that is really different," Louise says. "But I like it. Where did you get the idea?"

"If I tell you, you'll laugh, Louise," Fran says.

"Don't tell me; I know: Jesus gave it to you!" Louise laughs and rolls her eyes.

"Yep, exactly right," Fran says. "My goodness, is it time to go home already? Where did this day go?"

Sometimes we get in ruts, and we don't have to be in those ruts. Try doing what you do every day with a different approach, and that will take away a lot of boredom. Just changing the schedule and routine can help.

Day Five

How to cope with boredom on your job—that's Fran's dilemma. But she's learned some valuable lessons on practical things she can do when she's feeling unmotivated and bored.

Fran took some new approaches to her work and found it put a lot of enthusiasm back into her job. She simply made some changes in her usual routine and did a few things more creatively. That has helped a great deal. It's Saturday now, and she's meeting her friend, Nancy for lunch to ask her advice about being bored with her job.

They have a long discussion about boredom, and Nancy agrees it's a challenge everybody has to face on and off throughout their careers. "No job is without its boring aspects, that's one thing I've come to accept, Fran," Nancy says.

"I'm beginning to understand that," Fran says, "but I really think I've outgrown the job in a sense. I'm ready for a bigger challenge."

"Do you see another job in the company that interests you?" Nancy asks.

"Yes, as a matter of fact," Fran answers, "but I'm not qualified; they would never consider me...."

"Now, Fran, don't start with the negative prophecies. You need to identify your career goals and then put a plan in place to make yourself qualified," Nancy tells her.

"Well, I'd like to be... I really think I could do a good job... I'd like my boss's job," Fran finally gets it out.

"Great..." Nancy starts to reply.

"But they'd never consider me. I haven't been there long enough..." Fran starts again.

"Stop it, Fran," Nancy says. "Let's just make a list of the qualifications necessary to do your boss's job; then we'll talk about what you can do to acquire the skills and experience you need as quickly as possible."

For about an hour, the two of them make notes and discuss what Fran needs to do to be qualified for the job she wants. Then Nancy says, "If I were you, I'd go to your boss and let him know that you want to be in line for his job when he gets promoted. Ask him to give you assignments or suggestions that will help you."

"You mean, tell him I want his job?" Fran is surprised at Nancy's suggestion. "Sure, there's nothing wrong with that," Nancy says.

As Fran goes back home, she says to Jesus, "Nancy had some great advice. Thanks, Jesus, for your help." She can feel his smile of approval and remembers another verse from Proverbs 19:20—when you listen to advice and accept instructions, in the end you will be wise.