



June 30, 2019

OPEN

Who is the greatest escape artist of all time, in your opinion? Are you an escape artist? Are you seeking in God merely some sort of escape from the realities and responsibilities of life?

Some of the more classic escape methods are obvious: *alcoholism, drugs abuse, sexual promiscuity*. There are also the equally dangerous but socially acceptable escapes of *ambition, materialism or thrill-seeking*.

DIG

Today we are examining the corrupting influence of **escapism** on the Gospel message. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines escapism as the “habitual diversion of the mind to purely imaginative activity or entertainment as an escape from reality or routine”...to which we might “responsibility”.

The original “escape artists” were Adam and Eve. They were the first ones to seek an escape from their failure and brokenness, rather than to encounter God and His redemptive love.

The temptation to escapism is that we deny our need for redemption. We want to run from the reality and the responsibility of our sin and alienation from God. How is this seen in society today? Consider escapism from...

➔ **The direction of the serious but secular** – many individuals choose to escape from guilt and brokenness by taking a secular humanistic approach to life. Such individuals would refer to religion as a “crutch” or “escapism”. Yet the reality is that a life devoted to rationalism or science alone, is in itself a form of escapism. In a recent presentation, [Can Science Explain Everything](#), Oxford Mathematics Professor and evangelical believer John Lennox states,

Science now means “the natural sciences”. These days, the idea that is common in academia is that natural sciences are the only way to truth. Philosophically, we call that “scientism”. There is a conflict – but it’s not a between science and God, it’s between theism and atheism – the two worldviews.

➔ **The direction of the spiritual but superficial** – the authors of *Renegotiating Faith*, a study of Canadian millennials’ attitude toward faith, which was published last year (12-13) states this,

Although emerging adulthood is an unprecedented time of opportunity for young adults it has also spawned a collection of new fears and anxieties. The

Fear Of Missing Out (FOMO), the Fear of Not Being Amazing (FNBA), and the Fear Of Passionless Monotony (FOPM) press in on young adults ever more as they approach age 30, which, for many, marks the limit of emerging adulthood and a forced entry into adulthood.

Dallas Willard in his book *Divine Conspiracy* writes this insightful comment on our contemporary, superficial culture,

Now the law is “Be cute or die.” The only sincerity bearable is clever insincerity. That is what the clothing and greeting card graffiti *really* scream out. The particular “message” doesn’t matter.

Timothy Keller has written a wonderful resource on the Gospel, *Center Church* (Zondervan, 2012, 32) in which he suggests that two questions are addressed by the Gospel. First, there is the personal question, “*What must I do to be saved?*” Secondly, there is the bigger concern, “*What hope is there for the world?*” He writes,

The danger in answering only the first question...without the second...is that, standing alone, the first can play into the Western idea that religion exists to provide spiritual goods that meet individual spiritual needs for freedom and bondage. It does not speak much about the goodness of the original creation of God’s concern for the material world, and so this conception may set up the listener to see Christianity as sheer escape from the world.

Timothy Keller writes, “The gospel is this: We are more sinful and flawed in ourselves than we ever dared believe, yet at the very same time we are more loved and accepted in Jesus Christ than we ever dared hope.”

How can we make such a conclusion? In the Bible God has revealed His amazing love for us. Read **Jeremiah 29:10-14** carefully. Notice that God promises to be our **Redeemer**. His pledge to bring His goodness into our lives is predicated upon us not escaping our sin, but having a redemptive encounter with Him. So in the process of God redeeming us we must...

1. **come to a place of honesty about our rebellion against God - v. 10**
2. **accept the truth that God’s purpose is the best for our life - v. 11**
3. **repent of our futile efforts to escape from our sin and failure - v. 12**
4. **make a total surrender of our life to God - v. 13**
5. **trust God’s restorative and regenerative work in our lives - v. 14**

REFLECT

We must not use the Gospel as an escape from the tough questions of life. The more self-reliant we live, the more we’ll be tempted to deny our avoid our need for redemption.

But as Dallas Willard writes, “When we see Jesus as he is, we must turn away or else shamelessly adore him.”

To reflect more on the passage for today, read Russell Moore’s article [Does Jeremiah 29:11 Apply To You](#)