**The Problem of Escapism:**

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**Finding Courage in God to Face a**

**Difficult World**

**An Introductory Scenario**

1. **Common Themes in the Experience of Escapism**
* **Escapism is the patterned tendency to avoid difficult aspects of personal responsibility by engaging with separate, easier, and usually less productive tasks.**
	+ Escapism can occur in response to anything from regular daily pressures of life to painful personal tragedy. Personal comfort or relief becomes the primary motivation, over and against personal calling of God.
	+ Scaled: Escapism can range from the small problem of distraction to the larger problem of immersion.
		- Distraction – Attention is hindered from one’s responsibilities by small amusements or breaks
		- Immersion – Wholly engaging in am alternate framework of reality
* **Escapism is most clearly seen as a behavioral tendency, but it is an entire perspective involving beliefs and desires.**
	+ Escapism involves the full breadth of the soul’s functions—it shapes the way a person sees everything in life, not just the hobby or amusement they are obsessed with.
		- Thoughts – We begin to see the world as too difficult, too overwhelming. We believe that our lives were made for the weekend. We stop believing in the meaningfulness of routines, of work that plods along. We reject the idea that God choses to glorify himself in our faithfulness to basic responsibilities.
		- Feelings – We feel bored and even averse to responsibilities that do not give immediate pleasure. We long for ease and comfort, or adventure and excitement—all without the cost of having to earn it. We fantasize of a life that is easier or more thrilling than the one we’re in. This makes us often discontent or overwhelmed with life as it is.
		- Actions – Escapism is our tendency to run to distractions to avoid difficulty. It can occur in anything from amusements—like online gaming to TV shows, to social media. It can occur in hobbies—motorcycling, professional sports, scrapbooking. It can occur in even in our own tendency to daydream, to dither time away, to procrastinate.
	+ KEY PRINCIPLE: Escapism shows what we we believe, what we want, and what we’re most committed to.
1. **Relevant Themes in Scripture for the Experience of Escapism**
* **We tend to be more concerned with immediate personal comfort than God’s personal call to productive work. The Bible calls this laziness (Prov 26:13-16).**
* **People should expect life to be difficult until they are home with God (Eccl 1:2-5).**
* **People were designed by God to find satisfaction in their work, and this glorifies Him (Gen 2:5-9, 15).**
* **People were designed by God to find refreshment in their rest, and this glorifies Him (Gen 2:2-3).**
* **Absence from trouble will only be found ultimately in the presence of God; and the Christian will get a foretaste of this peace by seeking God as their refuge (Matt 11:28-30).**
1. **Living by Faith When Experiencing Temptation toward Escapism**
* Identify the rival refuges of your soul.
	+ Consider how you use your time: Our personal schedules say a lot about the desires and loyalties of the heart.
	+ Consider what you tend to talk about (or don’t talk about): What a person is most comfortable or eager to talk about shows where his desires lie.
* Identify what difficulty you are responding poorly to.
	+ Minor daily difficulties
	+ Major pain of tragedy
	+ Fear of Failure or the Unknown
* Seek God in the pertinent truths of Scripture.
	+ People were created by God to work.
	+ People were created by God to rest.
	+ Life will be difficult in this age.
	+ God is the only true refuge for the soul.
* Coordinate a realistic, consistent strategy for putting off avenues of escape and replacing it with genuine work and genuine rest.
	+ Repentance: At the level of behavior and desire
	+ Faith: Asking God for faith to believe what is true through regular Bible intake and prayer, particularly about the themes above
	+ Radical Amputation: While the avoidance of temptation entirely is not possible, the avoidance of the strongest temptations often is.
		- Schedule
		- Access
	+ Regular Accountability: Not necessarily a weekly meeting, but the expectation that this topic will be regularly broached.

**Concluding Thoughts on How God Uses Our Tendency to Escapism**