

# The Art of Escape

(Part 4 of a 5-part series)

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“I don’t like conflict.”

They’re words that ring true for many people, but for some the dislike of conflict is so strong that rather than swallowing hard and confronting their situation, they use a variety of means to escape conflict altogether.

The first art of escape is *ignoring*. The thinking is: “if I ignore the conflict long enough, it will cease to exist.” Texts go without reply, emails get deleted, and phone calls are left unanswered. Sometimes this works as the conflict is forgotten; sometimes this escalates the conflict; and occasionally this becomes the end of a relationship. Ignoring God’s requirements for righteous living is its own conflict with God and comes with serious consequences! (Leviticus 20:1-5; Psalm 60:15-23, 66:18; Proverbs 1:24-27)

The second art of escape is *distracting*. The thinking is: “if I never engage in the conflict, the other person will give up.” Conversations are constantly diverted from the issue at hand to meaningless peripheral circumstances. Distracting from a typical conflict situation would sound something like this:

W: “I need to talk to you about last night.”

H: “Hey, did you get a new shirt?”

W: “No, I’ve had this shirt for a long time. Do you realize what you said really hurt me?”

H: “Did you see the final score of the game? Our team played amazing!”

W: “No, I don’t care about the game. I’m hurt. Aren’t you listening to me?”

H: “Want a soda?”

W: “No, now listen to me please! I want to talk about this!”

H: “I really need some BBQ chips. I’ll be back later.”

The usual result of such conversation is absolute frustration, and a gradual decline in the relationship as unresolved conflicts pile up.

The third art of escape is *excusing*. The thinking is: “if I make up a good enough reason for my behavior (or lack thereof), the other person will feel sorry for me.” This is also a form of blaming, where someone or something else is accused as the cause of the conflict – for instance an addiction, a bad habit, a disability or incapability, or something in one’s history such as abuse or trauma. The goal is to remove one’s personal responsibility in the situation, but the usual result is

appearing foolish to others. Think of Moses' responses to the Lord in Exodus 4:1, 10, 13.

The fourth art of escape is *flight*. The thinking is: "if I run far enough away, it's impossible for the conflict to follow and I'll have peace." Jonah is the perfect Biblical example of fleeing (Jonah 1:3), but as with most such escapes God and circumstances do follow!

The final art of escape is *suicide* – whether threatened, attempted, or actual. Being a very delicate subject we can't dedicate sufficient space to this topic and offer our sympathy to those who have endured suicide's consequences. The thinking is: "if I threaten / attempt suicide, others will pity me – or – if I kill myself, I'll be free." The latter is the ultimate form of escape.

This life will have its share of conflicts, and the reality is that there is no escaping them. Find strength in God and help from others to face your conflicts head on!

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