

MAKING THE GREAT ESCAPE

Though escape is a game we learn as children, secret desires to disappear unnoticed--and to surface into a more agreeable situation--intensify in proportion to stress.

In his single-digit years, our son sharpened the secret art of escape virtually nightly. Feigning invisibility, he clambered without fanfare to the back of our station wagon to squeeze into the tiniest available cranny. And we, waiting until dead calm replaced the scuffling required to effect absolute disappearance, pretended indifference.

Ultimately, a frantic search for the missing boy ensued, punctuated with exaggerated intonations concerning his inexplicable evaporation. "Have you seen Barrett, Mom? I can't find him anywhere!" "No, Dad, he must not be in the car!" Then Mom lowered her voice for assumed secrecy--and a turn of the tables. "He's not here. Let's make our escape."

At that pronouncement of devious intent, the missing boy unfailingly sprang up, full of boisterous giggles. "You can't leave without me! I was here all the time!" His grand deception--and another foiled escape--consistently beset us with roars of laughter.

But along the road to grown-up life, we occasionally flirt with the seductive phantom of escape, fantasizing how a change might set aright the wrongs of a tilted world. Albert Einstein once identified the consummate escapists. "One of the strongest motives that lead men to art and science is escape from everyday life with its painful crudity and hopeless dreariness, from the fetters of one's own ever-shifting desires." Ordinary people escape, too.

For just an hour this past weekend, Lake Beaverfork beckoned us to flee to her, and we succumbed.

There, lulled by her lapping, lapping, gently slapping waves, our souls soon sufficiently quieted to absorb the chirps of robins skritch for worms along the shore. Songbird serenades filled the intervals between silent swoops from ground to treetop and back.

Children's laughs wafted across the watery expanse, drowned from time to time by raucous roars of jet skis dangerously careening in crisscrossing arcs.

After rumbling into the parking lot on their Harley, a couple strolled hand in hand to lose themselves in their own flavor of escape on the isolated dock. And perhaps in flight from interfering friends, a student in the nearby pavilion furiously flipped pages and scribbled in her notebook.

Tempered by the unexpectedly cool but arid lake breezes drifting through our open windows, the mosaic of sights and sounds infused a particularly satisfying feel to the moment. And as Alice once stepped through the looking glass into an altered world, the book we read aloud flung open inviting portals to environs devoid of ragged edges and frazzled emotions.

Before departing, we prayed, thanking God for the basic, satisfying simplicities of His provision: the trees, birds, water, sounds--even the struggles motivating our escape. Thus refreshed by having shed tired selves for a brief hour, we went on about our former business.

Escapes for just a season last, but God's provisions never pass.