



The Escape Cycle:

Understanding the Pattern That Keeps Us Stuck

The *Escape Cycle* is a repeating pattern of emotional and psychological responses that many individuals unconsciously experience when attempting to find happiness and meaning. It moves between moments of dissatisfaction and temporary fulfillment, often rooted in self-determined fantasy rather than grounded reality. This cycle, unless interrupted, leads to a continual loop of striving, disappointment, and unrest.

The Four Stages of the Escape Cycle

1. DISCONTENT

Core Belief: *"I need something to satisfy me."*

This phase begins with a gnawing sense that something is missing. Life feels dull, relationships feel unsatisfying, or one's sense of purpose seems blurry. This emotional unrest prompts a search for relief—often external and self-defined.

2. DEFINITION

Core Belief: *"I decide what makes me happy."*

In an attempt to alleviate discontent, a person defines what they believe will bring happiness. It could be a relationship, career change, experience, possession, or personal reinvention. The key characteristic of this phase is the creation of a personal *fantasy* about what life *could* be.

3. DISTRACTION

Core Belief: *"This makes me happy."*

The person throws themselves into the pursuit or possession of what they've defined as



their source of joy. For a time, it works. The distractions are powerful enough to mask the underlying discontent—until reality begins to intrude.

4. DISILLUSION

Core Belief: *"I'm not happy anymore."*

Eventually, the fantasy loses its luster. The job doesn't satisfy. The credit card bill arrives. The relationship cracks. The experience fades. The temporary distraction crashes against the immovable wall of reality. Disappointment sets in—and the cycle restarts.

The Two Worlds: Fantasy vs. Reality

At the core of the Escape Cycle lies a tension between **fantasy** and **reality**. The fantasy world offers alluring promises: instant gratification, personal autonomy, and emotional high. Reality, on the other hand, invites us into maturity, self-awareness, and surrender to truths beyond ourselves.

While fantasy offers a shortcut to happiness, it often fails to deliver lasting fulfillment. Reality may feel slower, harder, or less glamorous—but it invites us to engage in transformation rather than escape.

Why the Escape Cycle Is So Dangerous

- **It feels normal.** Many people live their entire lives in the cycle and assume it's just how life works.
- **It delays healing.** The true roots of dissatisfaction remain unexamined and untreated.
- **It exhausts purpose.** Repeated crashes wear down one's energy, hope, and ability to dream.
- **It isolates us.** Fantasies are often private and self-centered, keeping us from honest relationships.



THE MOMENTUM CYCLE:

How to Move from Self-Centered to Jesus-Centered)

Let's move from an escape mentality to a Kingdom momentum mentality. Life in Kingdom reality is still messy, but it carries beauty because Jesus stands at the center. Instead of running from reality, we embrace it—believing that God is at work right here, right now. And rather than retreating into fantasy—self-centered, self-defined, and self-directed—we recognize that God has given us imaginations on purpose. When surrendered to Jesus, those imaginations stop being escapes from reality and instead become windows into it, revealing new and exciting Kingdom innovations that move His story forward through us.

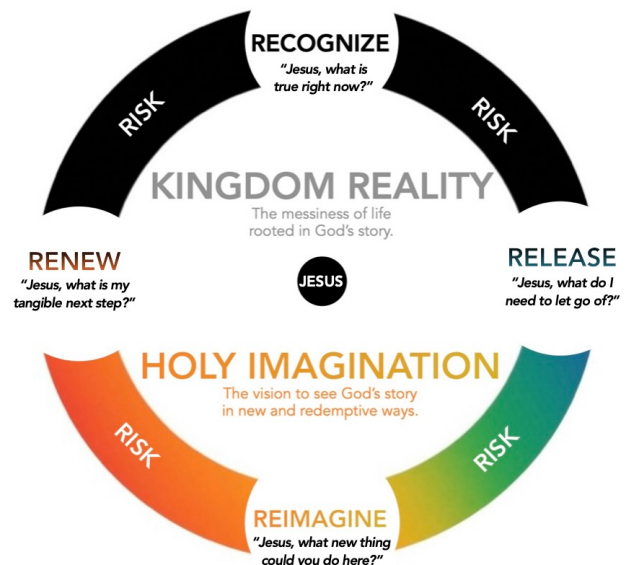
Each stage of the Kingdom Momentum Cycle carries an element of risk. Recognizing reality risks seeing what we'd rather avoid. Releasing control risks letting go of the outcomes we've tried to manage. Reimagining risks believing that something new is actually possible. And Renewing risks acting on what Jesus has shown us, even when the path isn't clear. Without risk, faith is unnecessary. But when we embrace it, risk becomes the doorway where trust grows, courage deepens, and the Kingdom moves forward.

The Four Stages of the Momentum Cycle

1. RECOGNIZE

Core Focus: *"Jesus, what is true right now?"*

Pause, pray, and face reality honestly—no disguises, no self-editing. It's where you name the messiness, the emotions, the circumstances, and even the desires you might rather ignore. Asking Jesus what's real opens the door to seeing life the way He sees it: clearly, truthfully, and without condemnation. Recognition keeps you from escaping into denial or distraction and grounds you in the present moment where transformation can begin.



2. RELEASE

Core Focus: *"Jesus, what do I need to let go of?"*

Move from gripping control to open-handed trust. We often carry fears, expectations, or self-made plans that keep us stuck. By asking Jesus what you need to release, you give Him permission to point out the things you're clutching too tightly—whether it's your need for answers, perfection, or approval. This surrender isn't passive; it creates space for His story, His timing, and His peace to shape what comes next.

3. REIMAGINE

Core Focus: *"Jesus, what new thing could you do here?"*

Invite Jesus to show you possibilities beyond what you can see. This step keeps wonder, hope, and creativity rooted in His redemptive vision, not in your own escape plan. Reimagining with Jesus gives you permission to dream about restoration, healing, or new opportunities while staying anchored in His character and promises.

4. RENEW

Core Focus: *"Jesus, what is my next tangible step?"*

The final step turns vision into reality. Renewal isn't about a grand plan; it's about the next faithful action that brings what Jesus showed you into the real, everyday world. Sometimes it's a conversation, a change in attitude, or a practical decision. Other times it's simply staying open to His timing. Renewal is where imagination and reality meet—where God's story begins reshaping yours through simple, courageous obedience.

Conclusion: From Escape to Encounter

The Escape Cycle thrives in the absence of authentic meaning. But when we trade fantasy for holy imagination, self-definition for surrender, and distraction for transformation, we step out of the cycle and into the possibility of lasting freedom.

This is where the Momentum Cycle begins. It takes the same raw materials of life—our messiness, our longings, our imaginations—and places them in Jesus' hands. He invites us into Kingdom reality, not to escape the world, but to reimagine it with Him. As we Recognize, Release, Reimagine, and Renew, life stops circling the drain of escape and begins moving forward with Kingdom purpose, beauty, and possibility.