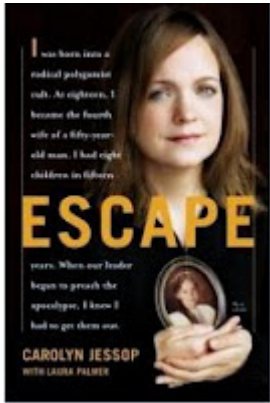


Review: Escape



I was lent this book by a friend who urged me to read it. I took it on holiday with me and read it over a couple of nights in a Canberra caravan park. It is a well-written (with ghost-writer help) autobiography of Carolyn Jessop, a young woman who was once a member of the polygamous cult, “Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints.” It details her life growing up in the FLDS, her marriage at eighteen as the fourth wife of a fifty-year old man, and ultimately her escape from the community and the struggle for the custody of her eight children.

It is a gripping book, well crafted to keep the suspense going. It’s a don’t-want-to-put-this down story. My reaction was emotional – angry, sad, wistful etc.

The subject matter is, of course, disturbing. The accounts of spiritual abuse, emotional abuse, physical abuse, and sexual abuse while not graphic are described rather than alluded to. What comes through is this young woman’s intelligence and tenacity. In the end, as she finds herself becoming free of the religious mindset that would keep her subservient we see her make use of her in-built ability to assess people and situations, to manipulate to survive, to balance the covert and the overt, until she is able to not just rescue herself but also her children, one of whom was seriously ill.

The books’ blurb describes the situation:

“Carolyn’s every move was dictated by her husband’s whims. He decided where she lived and how her children would be treated. He controlled the money she earned as a schoolteacher. He chose when they had sex; Carolyn could only refuse – at her peril... No woman in the country had ever

escaped from the FLDS and managed to get her children out too. But in 2003, Carolyn chose freedom over fear and fled her home with her eight children. She had \$20 to her name... in 2006 her reports to the Utah attorney general on church abuses formed a crucial part of the case that led to the arrest of its notorious leader, Warren Jeffs."

My gut reaction was "I want this woman to know Jesus, to know the love of God, the Truth that sets free rather than the Lie that so crushes and spoils." Despite the inevitable sensationalism that comes with a book that is mass-marketed we can tell that Carolyn Jessop is obviously a victim who has learned to fight a fight which she won. I pray for peace for her and her children.

