“You’re Building Your Ark.”

Trust, family, community, cooperation, resiliency, embracing absurdity, and pursuing goals are touchstones of a meaningful life.

September 5, 2019 By Adam Hayden

We sat down as a family on a Friday night to have pizza and watch a movie.

Whitney teaches yoga three nights each week, Noah and Gideon have weekly soccer practice, Isaac wrapped up karate class just as his Scout pack kicks off another year, all of the boys have a weekly Little Ninjas class that meets on different nights, Noah and Isaac are bringing home nightly homework, and I co-lead a monthly Twitter chat and monthly virtual support group that meets on the first and third Sunday evenings, respectively. Gideon is off to half-day preschool three mornings each week; otherwise, “Little Adam” is my buddy, at my side most other days.

I am the stay-at-home parent, including the usual housework, and I am the cook. I fit in time to work on two part time jobs—one as an instructional designer with my supportive employer, Briljent, the other, a research assistant for the department chair and professor of philosophy of science at IUPUI. At least once each month, sometimes more, I serve as a guest lecturer in classes at both Indiana University School of Medicine and the IU School of Liberal Arts at IUPUI. I try to protect time for daily writing.

Whitney leaves for her day job at Eskenazi by 7 most mornings, and many evenings she doesn’t have time to stop by home on her way from her day job to the yoga studio. She recently started as a part time occupational therapist for the Center Grove school district, working with elementary-age kids with developmental disabilities. Yes, that brought her number of jobs to four!

Because I do not drive as a result of my brain tumor-related epilepsy, we rely on the support from our extended family to get everyone where they need to be. For our family of five, this feels like organizing a conference every week.

Does this sound like your family?

Our cultural norms, in the Western World, and especially in America, lead us to derive our personal worth from notions of productivity and earnings. We often lament how busy we all are, yet we continue to measure our status by the number of things on our plate.

As our boys get older and more independent, the daily wrestling match to change out of pajamas and dress for their day is getting easier, but changing diapers is traded in for monitoring screen

time. Reading books at bedtime is replaced by checking homework and setting out clothes to ease the morning race to the bus.

Friday night.

It's one night that we work hard to protect for our family.

Last week, we decided on *Evan Almighty* as our best bet for a movie that would hold the attention of our eight-, five-, and four-year-old, and that would give me and Whit a break from YouTube videos of other families–parents or guardians of young kids, you know what I mean.

The movie stars Lauren Graham as the patient and thoughtful spouse to Steve Carell's character, a recently elected member of Congress who is visited by Morgan Freeman, playing God. Freeman instructs Carell to build an ark, and in the process Carell transforms into a kitschy pop culture Noah-like character.

In the face of the seemingly delusional Carell, Graham's character decides to leave Carell (only to return later; Hollywood drama). I turned to Whitney, aware of my own seemingly delusional philosophical study, that I left a successful career ten years ago to pursue, and now I spend my days reading phenomenology, and writing blog posts.

I thanked her for not leaving me.

"You're building your ark," she said.

In the tradition of scholars and writers like theologian Marcus Borg and mythologist Joseph Campbell, we are reminded that stories need not be factual to be true. Certainly, the Noah story is just such a non-factive "truth." To interpret what this story means, we must better understand the historical and political climate that shaped the narrative. What it means to me, more poignantly, what Whitney's comment means to me, is an affirmation that trust, family, community, cooperation, resiliency, embracing absurdity, and pursuing goals are touchstones of a meaningful life.

"I am so busy."

"I have a lot on my plate."

I am just as guilty as you are, using these replies and remarks as surrogates for real self worth. As excuses to not pursue what matters most to us. As distractions and obstacles we hide behind to avoid dedicating ourselves to the hard work of going against the grain. The terrifying work of challenging the status quo. The risky work of saying "no," and protecting time for self-work and family connectedness.

We are all works in progress.

We all must make our meaning; find our authentic self-worth.

We must build our arks.

We cannot do it alone.

Clear your plate, and let’s get to the really valuable work.

This post originally appeared on Glioblastology on September 5, 2019. It is republished with permission.

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.
http://beta.docker.cancerhealth.com/blog/building-ark