

# Looking Inward

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## Seizing the Opportunity

The recent movie *Evan Almighty* is a comedy with interesting theological overtones. Morgan Freeman plays God, who persuades a congressman to build an ark just as Noah was called upon to do some time ago. In the course of answering “the call” to build this large boat, the congressman loses his wife and children, who think he is having a mid-life breakdown.

Before his wife reaches her mother’s house, she and the children stop at a restaurant. She is left alone at the table when the children go to the bathroom, and God, Morgan Freeman, approaches her in the form of a waiter. As she shares with him the story of her husband, the boat, the breakup of their family, and her wondering where God has been in all of the chaos, he offers a fresh perspective on how God works.

He says that when people ask God for courage, God gives them an opportunity to be courageous; when people ask for love, God gives them an opportunity to give and receive love; when people ask for success, God gives them an opportunity to be successful; and when people ask for family, God gives them an opportunity to be family. The congressman’s wife ponders his perception and decides to return to her husband to seize the opportunity to “be family.” It’s the “seizing” that requires our participation, our risk, our faith. Sometimes, we miss the opportunity God provides because we hesitate “to seize” our part in the fulfillment of our request.

When I encounter people in counseling, they are experiencing some type of personal crisis that carries with it a personal request - *How do I save my \_\_\_\_\_? What do I do? What’s my next move? Who do I need to see? Where do I go from here?* These are frequent expressions of their distress. As I explore and unpack their request, in addition to the details and history of the crisis, there begins to develop a picture of “an opportunity to be seized.” This “seizing” usually requires risk - a step into the unknown.

When the congressman’s wife returns to him, she

has to face a host of fears. Perhaps, she has to face her obsession with “what others think.” Maybe, she needs to look at her priorities – the “what-matters-the-most” in life list. Perhaps, she measures her self-worth by her husband’s success. Without actually knowing it, she has made her husband an extension of herself. Since he has fallen out of favor with the powers that be, she feels awful about herself. The situation has exposed the fears and unresolved self-worth issues that have prevented her from doing her part in attempting to “make family.” “Being family” wasn’t to be handed to her on a silver platter. To “seize,” she has to take a step of faith into the unknown to “ready herself” to handle what she’s asked for. This is no easy step.

I once met with a frustrated and angry teenager. He was depressed and down on himself for being “too dependent upon his parents” for his needs. He really didn’t like the control “his dependence” gave them over him. After listening closely, I wondered why he wasn’t working part time to make his own money. His fears immediately rose to the surface. He gave a list of reasons why he’d never find work: too young, no experience, too little time, others would judge him for his appearance. It slowly dawned on him that he had to take a step in “seizing” the opportunity to become more independent. He liked movies. The next week he went to a local video store and asked for work. Two weeks later, he got a call and a job he could work after school. With his parents doing their part of letting go, he “seized the opportunity” to build confidence in managing his own life. He never looked back.

I realize problems have layers of complexity and fears. If it were as simple as finding work at a video store, you’d have done it a long time ago. You may hunger for the opportunity to be happy, to be at peace, to live your dreams, to live without fear, abuse, threat, to be true to yourself...for once. God promises opportunity; we must remove obstacles that would hinder our “seizing.” And, who knows? This day may be the day you start building your own boat!