

## Out of Work

We are receiving a number of calls from people out of work who need our help. For many the loss of a job represents much more than just financial hardship. It hits at the core of their identity, significance, and safety and security as a person and as a family. "What do I do when I'm out of work, there are no jobs to be had, I'm struggling to care for myself and my family and life currently seems to have no meaning?" are questions we currently hear.

Our advice: do something! People tend to become immobilized or frozen with fear and anxiety. Psychologists call this learned helplessness. It is the sense that I can do nothing to change my life or my current situation so I do nothing. Something is better than nothing. Just because you cannot do the job you have done for years doesn't mean you cannot do something. Doing nothing leads to nothing. Doing something leads to something.

If you cannot do your current job due to layoffs or job downsizing, find either a temporary job at any pay or volunteer. Sometimes, due to fear of loss of unemployment benefits, people feel they are better off doing nothing or looking for the same or similar job or position they just lost. While this might hold some intrinsic logic it leads to emotional pain, anger, and eventually depression when the job doesn't materialize. It may take months or even a year or two to find a similar or satisfactory position to replace the old one. Potential employers want to know what you have been doing in the meantime. Looking is not a job. Looking is an activity to incorporate into your schedule but not to replace meaningful activity.

Currently many of the job search gurus tout looking as your job between jobs. In former times when jobs were more plentiful and the time between jobs was less this may have been sound advice. Today it is not. For both men and women, meaningful activity in the community that contributes to the well-being of others as well as their own well-being moves them forward. The best time to get a job is when you have one even if it pays less than what you had previously. If you cannot find a paying job volunteer for a non-paying job. Moving forward and making a meaningful contribution will help others and yourself. It not only keeps your sense of self and well-being alive so life is still meaningful, it puts you in the community where you may find work through contacts. Contacts are still the best way to find work. Once you have a job you can apply for a better job and work your way back financially.

In today's environment loyalty is not the same factor as before. If you find work you do not need to stay there for two years or an extended length before applying for a higher paying position elsewhere. The rules have changed. Everyone understands that there are good people with good skills looking to reposition themselves in the market place due to changing market place conditions.

Age is also not the factor it once was. Although many older employees are currently being let go due to age and income requirements that companies no longer want to meet, there are many companies looking for experience and wisdom from an older hand. It may mean a change of career or occupation or even a move; however, in today's environment with the change in retirement ages and investment portfolios the dream of early retirement or even retirement at 65 is changing. If you think of work as an on-going meaningful activity it is more important even in your late 50's and early 60's to reposition yourself to continue to work in a meaningful and fulfilling occupation than to realize at 65 you still need income and will be saying "welcome to Wal-Mart" (no slam on Wal-Mart intended).

At age 85 Caleb in the Bible was just getting started. Many of our greatest examples come from individuals who worked a long and meaningful life. Retirement is a truly American invention. It is not scriptural. If you look at life as working for the Kingdom of Heaven and not just making a living, God will always find something meaningful for us to do. If our life no longer had meaning, God wouldn't keep us here. For now let's find out what He wants us to do. That is where our life has meaning. He will supply the rest. After all that is what he promises in Mathew. We won't go hungry or naked. We just might lose cable.