NOW WHAT?
The Healing Journey Through Job Loss

Many of us have found that in the difficult times of our lives, the friends who mean the most to us are those who have gone through something similar themselves.

That’s one reason we are passing along to you the story of a man who has seen the pain of job loss not only from the perspective of a career management consultant and counselor, but also as someone who has personally experienced what it means to get caught in the reorganization of a company.

In the following pages, my friend and RBC coworker Chuck Fridsma shares some of his own journey of employment, job loss, and faith in a way that we hope will help you or someone close to you.

Mart De Haan
WHEN YOUR WORLD COLLAPSES

The statistics are staggering. In a time of global economic instability unlike anything seen in decades, the most disturbing statistic is not the stock market's rise and fall, nor the billions of dollars of government bailout money, nor even the corporate failures—though they are all connected. The most overwhelming statistic is the number of people who have lost their jobs. In 2008 alone, more than 3 million people were laid off. Many of them were called into an office or taken aside by a supervisor to hear words that added them to the statistics: “I’m sorry, but we have to let you go.”

But the statistics alone don’t tell the whole story. What’s so staggering is the human loss. It doesn’t matter if we have been downsized or right-sized, laid off or outsourced, let go or fired. The pain and terrible toll of fear, anger, confusion, and uncertainty that happens when our world collapses around us can seem more than we can bear.

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In today’s uncertain economic climate, the things that used to matter don’t seem to make much difference anymore. Being effective in our work, having a long history of strong job performance, or being highly
skilled no longer guarantees that our job will be secure for the foreseeable future. The retirement nest-egg we had carefully stashed away has been severely diminished by plunging markets, and we find ourselves asking, “What do I do now?”

**IS THERE HELP IN A TIME OF JOB LOSS?**

Where do we turn for help when our world collapses? Because of the enormity of the job-loss crisis, more help is available than ever before. Trained professionals and many resources can help to clear the fog and give us the direction to take purposeful next steps.

Unemployment, particularly unexpected unemployment, can be a stressful and difficult experience. And because so many aspects of our lives are tied to our work, when we experience job loss, we are not only financially impacted, we are also affected socially, emotionally, physically, and even spiritually.

For a number of years, part of my job was helping other people through the loss of their job by sharing concern and counsel in their moment of loss.

**A HELPING HAND**

I had been working with a large Christian mental health organization when I was recruited by a global career transition and consulting firm. Contracted by employers, our focus was to advise and counsel organizations who were laying off employees, and then to be on hand when the layoffs occurred to assess and counsel the people affected.
Part of my role was to counsel individuals who had just lost their jobs. I often met with them only minutes after they had been notified of their job loss. I met individually with each of them and helped them to process what was going on and what the immediate next steps might be.

Everyone handles the shocking news differently, so it was important to listen and try to understand what was going on with each person. We would discuss what was happening emotionally, and I would assure them that it was okay and normal for them to be experiencing a variety of feelings. We’d discuss how to go home and break the news to their family members or spouse. I then would share what the process might look like over the next days, weeks, and months as they participated in our career transition program—a program to help them prepare for and locate jobs. I would emphasize that as of that moment they had transitioned into a job-search mode and they should never do anything that might burn bridges—especially with their former employer.

In any given year, our company had several hundred people go through the outplacement program. We met with them regularly for several weeks or months. Typical of all helping professions, the challenge of that role had its ups and downs.

**The Upside Of Helping.** One of the most fulfilling things about my role was that I was helping people in crisis—people who were emotionally bleeding. I had the opportunity to identify with their pain, provide hope and clarity, and watch them make progress, find
healing, and, in many cases, eventually see them in a better position than they had been in before.

It wasn’t unusual to be asked, “How can you stand to do that kind of work?” or “Isn’t that a depressing job?” The fulfillment came when I saw people transition successfully from a low moment in their life to a new chapter. That was rewarding and made me want to go on.

The Downside Of Helping. Early in my career as a helping professional, I learned that I shouldn’t personalize what was going on with the person I was helping. I heard a lot of tragedy and saw a lot of sadness, but my job was to remain objective and compassionate so that I could respond appropriately. If I would have become emotionally involved, it would have lessened my ability to provide the objective counsel that was needed.

Still, it was hard to stay distant. Sometimes when I left at the end of the day, I knew that people were in tremendous pain and hurt. At night, I would reflect back and pray that they would have peace in their crisis.

People would share about family situations and personal tragedies they were already facing, and the additional pain of losing their job felt like a series of huge waves hitting them. They were drowning, and it was my challenge to help resuscitate them.

The Starting Point Of Helping. Everyone receives the news of losing a job differently. Occasionally, I’ve seen people break out into a smile and say, “I’m so relieved.” When I asked why, they would say something like, “I’ve disliked this job and hated working here. This is going to give me a fresh start and a new
opportunity to go forward. I’m happy and relieved. This was the kick I needed.”

On the opposite side, however, are the more common reactions of shock, anger, betrayal, and resentment. People take losing a job very personally and feel as if they are being singled out unfairly.

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Part of the reason people are wounded emotionally is that their self-esteem is tied to their job (particularly with men). Their job has been their identity—how they see and describe themselves—and now their identity has been lost.

I’ve had people yell and swear at me because they transfer their anger at their boss or company to me. Realizing that, I would listen to them without getting defensive, and then try to help them understand what was happening. It was important for me to help them see that angry behavior would not be productive going forward. They needed to recognize that they couldn’t afford to behave inappropriately or make a bad impression on anyone, now that they were in a job-search mode. Unemployed, they needed to be on their best behavior.

Much of this would happen within a few minutes after they’d been told they had lost their job. Because they were emotionally bleeding—perhaps even in shock—they might not have heard or processed much of what I was trying to communicate.
As a result, we would try to focus our conversation on what they should do during the next 24 hours, knowing that we would meet again very soon. They needed some time to decompress and think about the blow they’d just received.

My role was to be a resource, a helping hand. And I went through this process many different times in many different ways with many different people.

But one day everything changed when I found myself on the other side of the conversation. I was told I was no longer needed in my job.

**WHEN THE SHOE IS ON THE OTHER FOOT**

When I met with people during their experience of job loss, I often would say, “Our jobs are only as good as we know them today.” And, having met with hundreds of people who never expected to lose their jobs, I realized that it would be naive to think that it couldn’t happen to me.

After several significant changes in my organization, I could see that things weren’t going very well. So I began to have an inkling that something was in the works. In a conversation I had with a community contact, I first got wind that my own position might be on the chopping block. This person had heard it from a reliable source. Hearing it third hand hurt deeply.

I had always trusted my employers and my relationships with them. I had always assumed that if I ever did lose my job that my boss—my friend—would sit down with me and say, “Chuck, the model of leadership in this organization is changing and we don’t see you fitting in anymore. As a result,
your position is going be eliminated.”

I was somewhat prepared for something like that. But I wasn’t prepared for finding out the way I did.

A meeting with me had been set up by someone in our organization to survey and evaluate some water damage that had occurred in our office complex. This person was a friend and a fellow member of our executive team. Once I was in the room alone with him, however, he gave me the unexpected news that I was going to be let go. He was the “designated messenger” for the CEO who hired me and for the president to whom I reported. I was caught totally unprepared and off-guard. It felt as if I had been set up and ambushed.

Of course, being a counselor and consultant with many years experience, I knew how I was supposed to behave. I knew that I had to listen, not overreact, and not debate or argue. I knew that these kinds of announcements are final, so any discussion wouldn’t make any difference.

So I listened and tried to understand. I heard what was said, and said little in return. The messenger left me alone in my office and then left town.

I became increasingly aware of my hurt and sadness. I felt betrayed and sat by myself for several minutes and cried. I felt numb, trying to process what had just happened.

After about half an hour, I called my wife. It was about 6 o’clock at night, so I said to her, “I’m on my way home, but I’ve just been told that I’m losing my job.” When I got home, my wife met me at the door and we cried together and began to “lean into the pain.”
I felt grief, loss, sadness, disappointment, and hurt. My wife was very understanding, helpful, and supportive, and we went through the experience together. Whenever one of us got into an emotional funk, the other would try to offer a more positive perspective to keep some balance.

A job loss is one of the most significant losses in one’s life (besides death and divorce). So it’s very normal to be upset. I knew that. But now I was experiencing it personally.

I talked to my pastor, and he helped give me a better perspective on what I was going through. I was able to cry again, to talk about my feelings, and to let my emotions spill out. His words were reassuring and what I needed to hear. He gave me wise advice for the challenges I would face going forward. And then he prayed with me.

I also talked with a close friend who is a psychologist. He helped to shape my perspective. And once again I allowed myself to cry and to talk about the hurt and disappointment. This was all part of the healing process I needed to go through so I could go forward. It’s difficult to make a new beginning until the ending is properly dealt with.

I had always advised people who go through a job loss not to shut themselves off from others or pretend that things aren’t as bad as
they really are. It’s a time to be honest and appropriately open to those you are close to. Your loved ones have much to offer if you will only allow yourself to be vulnerable and to hear what they have to say.

Fortunately for me, my former employer provided a severance package that allowed me adequate time to prepare for my next career.

So I searched out and met a lot of people. Of course I didn’t share with them in the same way that I did with my wife, friend, or pastor. But I still talked with them so I could broaden my perspective, gain new contacts, and stay active and in touch with the community.

During the first few weeks and months after I lost my job, I began to hear, more than ever before, what people shared with me. My radar was more “tuned in” to others because I now needed to hear what they had to say. I was listening—and really hearing.

What a growth experience! I look back now and think, *What an incredible opportunity I was given to redefine myself.* I read books. I exercised. I volunteered. I worked with a career counselor. I did a lot of things that allowed me to establish new priorities, to look at different career options, and to reinvent myself before going forward.

The spiritual aspect of my journey was also very important. As we all know, when we go through a crisis, we begin to see things differently. I found this to be true of Bible passages that I knew and had read many times before. Now those same verses had a different impact on me. Everything had become more relevant to what I was going through. God’s Word spoke directly to me in
ways it hadn’t in the past. It’s a painful way to grow, but my job loss became a real learning experience, strengthening my faith.
The journey toward growth begins with the way you respond to the news that you’ve lost your job. That reaction has several different elements.

HOW DO YOU RESPOND TO JOB LOSS?

We are complex beings with many layers, and each of those layers finds its way into the discussion when we think about the ways we respond to the loss of a job.

EMOTIONAL RESPONSES

Each person responds differently to the loss of a job. But usually there are common elements. It’s not unusual for most people to go through a grieving process known as the Kübler-Ross Grief Cycle in which emotional pain is dealt with in stages. Sometimes there is initial shock and denial, then anger and bottled-up feelings, then perhaps depression, a testing phase, and then eventually some acceptance of what has happened. Each stage has to be adequately addressed before the next major step. And it’s not unusual for a person to circle back to one of the previous stages weeks or months later when it is least expected.

Initially, most people are deeply worried. There are the immediate concerns about coming up with the house payment and meeting their other financial obligations. Some have the additional burden of children in college. And those who have special

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health needs in their family have not only lost their salary but have also lost their health benefits. It can be an excruciatingly heavy load to bear. The fact is that some employers do not provide even the most basic severance packages—and that compounds the concerns and fears.

Central to this burden, however, are the bottom-line questions that the majority of people battle with:
- What am I going to do now?
- How am I going to pay my bills?
- How will I feed my family?
- Where, in this economy, will I be able to find another job?
- How do I search for and locate another job?
- How long will it take?
- Can I make the same pay in another job?
- Where is God in all of this turmoil?

From the outset, it's important to understand that you are embarking on an emotional roller-coaster ride. In a life disruption this severe, there will be radical ups and downs. It would be naive to think differently.

There will be plenty of frustrations and rejections mixed in with great hope, possibilities, and aspirations. The emotional yo-yo will continue as you deal with the daily strain involved in the ensuing job search. It's challenging to invest yourself repeatedly in the grind and hard job of looking for work. Each time you finally make it to the interview stage, you must also be prepared for the reality that you may not be the candidate selected for the job. Then it starts all over again.

How do you view yourself in this job loss? The job market today is vastly different from what
it was several years ago. There used to be certain myths or misunderstandings about people who were jobless. It might have been assumed that they had done something wrong and, as a result, couldn’t hold on to a job.

Today those myths are all gone. Losing one’s job can happen to anyone. Anytime there is a leadership change, merger, acquisition, or a downturn in a business or an organization, employees end up on the chopping block.

Today, changing or losing your job no longer has the stigma it had in the past. Many good people, who previously had good jobs, are now out of work. Unfortunately, it's going to be that way for quite some time.

Gerry Crispin of Careerxroads, a New Jersey consulting firm, says, “Are you ever 100% out of the job market? Yeah, when you’re dead or retired.”

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Anytime there’s a leadership change, merger, acquisition, or a downturn in a business or an organization, employees end up on the chopping block.

In today's economy, unemployment is going to continue. Everyone is going to know someone who is unemployed or underemployed. For that reason, everyone should have a backup plan. Again, your job is only as good as you know it today. So everyone should have an up-to-date resume, along with an active and “warm” network of contacts
and a “Plan B” strategy.

The fact is that organizations are trying to do the best they can in a very fast-paced, uncertain, and competitive world. But sometimes, if they don’t make necessary adjustments, they are not going to be competitive or viable anymore. Employees are often the casualities. “If you aren’t changing, you’re dying” is the mantra of today’s business community.

**RELATIONAL RESPONSES**

As if the emotional struggle isn’t difficult enough, there’s also the personal network of relationships that becomes impacted by this loss. The need to deal with those relationships raises several questions of its own.

**What do you tell your family?** One of the major (and immediate) concerns for most people who lose their job is how to go home and tell the news to those who are most important to them—their spouses, immediate family members, and close friends. Keep in mind that how you tell them will often dictate their response.

For example, if you share this news in an emotional and angry manner, using dramatic language, you will condition the nature of their response. It’s vital to carefully think through the words, tone, and emotion behind what you are going to say before sharing the news.

The key thing is to be as genuine and objective as possible while telling a painful and sad story. It may be helpful to make a phone call before leaving work to say something like, “I’ve just gotten some bad news. The company is going through some changes and they don’t want me to be a part of it. I’ll be home shortly..."
and we can talk. I’ll share more details then.” That phone call simply gives the information. It doesn’t set off an emotional chain reaction.

When I lost my job, I waited about 20 minutes before I called my wife. It’s a difficult call to make, but you have to walk your loved ones through this loss one step at a time. And you need to let them know that you’re okay, even though you’re hurting.

Sometimes it may be best not to tell your entire family at the same time. Consider talking to your spouse privately first, so that you can discuss it and begin this difficult journey together.

When you initially share the bad news, let your spouse hear it from an attitude of calm and control rather than panic. Say something like, “We will survive and ‘make lemonade out of lemons.’ It’s going to work out because God is with us. Let’s look at this as an opportunity to begin a new chapter in life. Who knows what good things are awaiting us?”

Once you and your spouse are on the same page, you can talk to your children (if you have them and they are still at home). You could simply say, “I’m not going to be working at XYZ company anymore. They’re going in a direction they don’t want me to be a part of, so I’m going to look for other opportunities in the work world.” Assure them that you’re okay. Remember, if you’re too emotional, it will unnecessarily upset them and perhaps lead to more issues.

A career contains many phases and steps—and sometimes several stops. A particular job is just one step in a career. In today’s job market, the chances of a man or woman putting in 25 or more years at a particular...
company is becoming increasingly rare.

In fact, young people today start out their careers with the assumption that they may have 10 to 15 jobs over the course of their working career. That's considered the norm, and that new mindset is a part of what is known as “career management.”

Still, when those job changes are forced upon us, the shock of the loss is a heavy burden.

How do you respond to people when you have become unemployed?
First, be careful who you share with. If you need to vent, do that with a person you trust deeply. It's important not to let people in general see your hurt and frustration. Keep in mind that you are always just one person away from your next job. So keep your “game face” on.

You may hear comments like, “Have you found a job yet?” or “I thought you would surely have gotten a new job by now.” You’re already hurting, and then somebody makes an insensitive comment and may even laugh. It hurts.

You are always just one person away from your next job.

Frankly, sometimes people don’t realize (or care) how hurtful their comments might be. You must seek to take the high ground and respond in an appropriate way, or not at all.

In other cases, people may genuinely be trying to encourage you but may unintentionally make awkward and perhaps
hurtful comments like, “Oh, that company wasn’t going anywhere anyway. You ought to be thankful you’re out of there.” Regardless of the motive behind the comment, it still hurts. But once again, it’s best to give people the benefit of the doubt and try to move on.

In any case, the loss of a job is a painful experience—and it can be more than an emotional or relational event. It can be the beginning of a spiritual journey as well.

**SPIRITUAL RESPONSES**

When facing the challenges of a job loss, many people wonder about God’s part in it all. They wonder if God cares, or if He even may have caused the crisis. It makes them question God and themselves. When I lost my job, I had to ask myself the following questions:

“**What do I expect from God in all of this?**” As a Christian who had professed Jesus Christ as my Savior in my early twenties, I learned a different approach to the problem I faced.

In terms of the crisis I was facing, my faith and my outlook put it all in a different light. I could legitimately ask the question, “What do I expect from God?”

My faith is pretty childlike, so I do trust that God is going to take care of me. Whether it’s a job loss, a death in my family, or an illness that knocks me flat, I believe that I am still in God’s hands. This faith keeps me balanced and gives me the ability to trust God without continually questioning why He allows things to happen to me.

Unfortunately, I’ve seen people who have gone through a crisis, who months or years later are
still questioning why God let it happen. They are still bogged down, without making any progress.

But God often doesn’t answer why—and He doesn’t have to. He has revealed Himself in many different ways, but He’s still God. I’m never going to fully understand Him or His ways. But I believe that whether in life or in death, He will take care of me.

I don’t allow myself to drown in the “whys.” Instead, I try to say, “What can I learn from this?”

Through the struggles of life, I hope my faith will be strengthened and I will be able to move forward with improved perspectives and a deepened faith in God.

“What do I expect of myself in all this?”

God has blessed me with a good brain and solid resources. I knew I had to start looking for a way to use the talents and skills He gave me. I needed to look forward, not backward.

I also knew that I was in the backseat and that God was in charge. In fact, this experience renewed my dependence on God. There have been times when I felt more independent and assumed that I could make things happen on my own. But my job loss reminded me of my utter dependence on God.
It’s a balancing act. God is in the driver’s seat and I know He will provide for my needs. But I also know that I have a responsibility to work hard at what I am trying to accomplish.

In the end, however, God doesn’t expect us to resolve all the issues immediately or to solve every problem today. He simply expects us to do our best and to trust Him.

PRACTICAL RESPONSES
Searching for a job is a process, and there are logical steps to take. It can be summarized by first looking inward, then looking outward, and then moving forward.

Looking Inward.
A useful first step is to assess who and what you are. You will need to be honest with yourself, and then test your thinking and perceptions by discussing it with people you trust. Having participated in previous personal assessments can also be particularly useful.

In terms of looking inward, you should also take stock of what kind of person you are. Soon you will be “selling” or marketing yourself as the “product,” so you should know everything possible about yourself. Begin by asking and answering questions like:

• How do I deal with reversals? With bad news? With change?
• Do I tend to be a positive person or a negative person?
• Am I a victim or someone who gets back up and moves forward? How resilient am I?
• What are my priorities and values in life? What do I stand for?
• Am I a leader or a follower? Do I initiate...
activities or carry them out?
• What value can I bring to the workplace?
• What am I good at? What excites and fulfills me about work?
• Am I an extrovert or an introvert? Do others energize me or drain me? What type of work culture would fit me best?
• What industries would I want to work in? Which ones would I not want to explore?
• Do I want to work in a for-profit or not-for-profit organization?
• Is money or significance or happiness going to be my driving force?
• How far am I willing to travel to work? Am I willing to move my family to another city?

There are many questions to be answered before you try to write a resume or go to an interview. The key, however, is “Know thyself.”

Looking Outward.

Next, look beyond yourself by assessing your support system:
• Who do I trust?
• Who are my true friends?
• What groups do I belong to that can provide any assistance?

People without any relatives in town, who don’t belong to a church, and who live by themselves are much more vulnerable to depression—or worse—when they lose their job. Building and nurturing a network of solid relationships is an enrichment to our lives. It’s a protection against the isolation that can lead to even deeper personal struggles.

Make sure you look at your business or professional network. This is different from your support system. Your personal relationships will help and

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encourage you through the challenges ahead, but your business contacts can help build bridges to possible new opportunities:

- Who do you know in various industries that you can call, contact, or meet with?
- What additional contacts might they be able to provide?

Ford Myers, author of the book *Get The Job You Want*, *Even When No One’s Hiring* (Wiley, 2009), says that networking—reconnecting with college friends, former coworkers, and even other unemployed workers in the community—is “the single most important activity [people] can do when they are in transition.”

Sit down and make a list of friends, colleagues, and acquaintances and how you might connect with them. Research shows that most jobs (70 percent) are landed through networking.

Start gathering research on which industries and organizations are hiring and perhaps even growing.

- What are the trends in the industries you might be interested in?
- How could you provide value to the organizations you are targeting?

Make use of resources that inform you about who is hiring and what jobs are available. Research
companies by visiting their Web sites. That is where open jobs will be posted before they’re in the classifieds. Go online and explore the volume of excellent resources available at your fingertips as you begin your job search.

It may mean that you will have to transfer into a different industry. So as part of looking outward, you should investigate what companies are hiring and what kinds of transferable skills you could bring to that industry. What additional skills may you have to acquire to be more competitive?

You can also look in the classified ads. Keep in mind, however, that only 17 to 20 percent of the available jobs can be found listed there. Unless you expand your search options, you will be missing a key piece of the market—the hidden job market.

About 80 percent of the good jobs are in the hidden job market. This requires networking and a fairly significant amount of work by going out and talking with people to uncover those jobs.

*If you belong to a church, a professional group, a neighborhood association, or even the PTA, you have a network.*

You may think that you don’t have a network, but you do. It may be a limited network, but if you belong to a church, a professional group, a neighborhood association, or even the PTA, you have a network.

In networking, you don’t
ask someone for a job. Instead, you ask questions about local industries and what is taking place in the community. You ask about trends and what people like about their job and place of employment.

For example, if you know someone at your church who works in healthcare and you’re interested in exploring that industry, ask if you can meet for a chat. This can provide much-needed information, but there could be more. Remember, you are only one person away from a job. So when you talk with that person, you aren’t asking for a job, but you can make a positive impression. Once that person hears and understands what you are looking for and sees your value, anything can happen. In fact, that is how most of the good jobs are uncovered.

As you are looking outward and building your resources, remember that your relationship with the Creator is your most significant resource. Nothing can supply hope and confidence during a time of serious distress more than knowing that your life, and the lives of your family, are in the hands of the God who never sleeps or slumbers. As you walk through this experience, knowing that you are walking with Him is more than just a nice feeling. Your relationship with the God who cares is the most significant thing about you.

These steps are part of looking outward, and are also the first steps in moving forward. It is where you begin looking through the windshield instead of the rearview mirror.

Moving Forward. After looking inward and outward, you need to begin to go forward. You can’t
afford to be consumed with the past. The process of moving forward involves setting up networking meetings, sending in resumes, contacting companies, and going for interviews. Your car may become your new office.

Several practical things are important as you move forward:

**Take Care Of Yourself.** Because of the rigorous demands of going through a job search, this is a time to focus on taking care of yourself emotionally, physically, and spiritually. Physical exercise is proven to be one of the most important undertakings in times of stress. Run, jog, walk, swim, or participate in whatever gives your body a regular workout. If you are overweight and appear unfit, how might a potential employer evaluate you? Make sure you stick to a healthy diet. Use this time to begin to define a new you.

**Connect With People.** Talk with one or two individuals you really trust. Is your pastor available? Do you have friends you can meet with on a regular basis?

Stay close to and share with the most important people in your life. Let them minister to you. Seek out professional help if necessary.

**Prepare For The Long Haul.** Remember, a job search is a process. Some people think that getting another job will be easy. But because they are unprepared for the long haul, they are likely to end up spinning their wheels. Why? Because they didn’t take the time to think about the process.

With any process, there is a series of steps. If you try to jump in in the middle of the process and then go
forward, you will soon find yourself spinning your wheels with nothing happening. Eventually, you'll have to go back to the beginning and start over. This accentuates the need for preparation. You must plan your work and work your plan.

**You must plan your work and work your plan.**

**Be Ready To Present Yourself.** I have often told people that when you embark on a job search, you have to think like a marketer who is marketing a product. In this case, you are the product. You have to know the product inside and out, put together a marketing plan, and then bring that product (yourself) to market and close the deal.

For example, if you were going to sell a toothbrush, you would have to know every detail about that toothbrush. This is part of the process of looking inward, then looking outward and putting together your marketing plan, and then moving forward and bringing yourself to the market and selling yourself.

As with the toothbrush, there are features and benefits of the product (you) that you are trying to sell. What separates you from all the other “toothbrushes” competing for jobs?

**Build A Resume.**

Another key step in moving forward is crafting a personal resume. If you have done a good job of self-assessment in your looking-inward phase, then you are prepared to identify what you are all about. A resume should be an accurate and
A resume is not just listing what you’ve done and where you’ve worked. . . . It should also include your potential value to an organization.

Instead of someone else’s?

Once again, a key factor in this process is that you understand yourself and can identify the benefits and unique skills you can bring to someone’s organization. Instead of saying that you worked at XYZ corporation and did such-and-such, you should consider again the analogy of the toothbrush. There are many manufacturers making toothbrushes. Why would someone want to buy your toothbrush instead of someone else’s?

Why would someone want to buy your toothbrush instead of someone else’s?

Because that’s what your next employer is going to want to know. What value will you bring to this job?

Consider again the analogy of the toothbrush. There are many manufacturers making toothbrushes. Why would someone want to buy your toothbrush?
of savings for the company. This shows your value as an employee, not just a list of things you did.

**Arranging Interviews.** Ultimately, moving forward means that you have to start setting up interviews. You’ve been sitting at a desk or at your kitchen table doing the paperwork. Now you have to go out and uncover rocks and turn over stones. Now’s the time to call people, make appointments, and meet with them.

Looking for a job is a full-time job. You won’t find jobs, particularly in today’s economy, by sitting home thinking your computer will notify you of something.

Still, many people are fearful of looking for a job because they don’t know what to do. And it’s even harder if you’re introverted or shy. Someone who is extroverted is going to have more energy and excitement about going out, meeting with people, and networking. But if you’re introverted and you hear that you must “sell” yourself as you would sell a product, I’m sure you’re cringing on the inside. Either way, you must force yourself to go out and do just that.

As you arrange for interviews, make sure you do enough research to really understand the job you are applying for. That knowledge alone will enable you to talk about how you could add value to that organization.

This is all part of moving forward and trusting that the time and effort you have invested in the process will be worthwhile. But even with full effort and hard work, results are not guaranteed.

If today’s economic climate hasn’t taught us anything else, it has shown us that things we once considered certain are much less reliable today. We may
even find ourselves wondering if anything is certain anymore.

WHAT CAN WE COUNT ON?

In the midst of an uncertain world, we may long for the certainties of job, income, professional growth, and work relationships—but those are just superficial. The true certainties our hearts long for run much deeper.

So, in an uncertain world, what can we count on?

LIFE IS TROUBLED

In the most ancient book in the Bible, a man named Job learned firsthand the pain of loss. He lost his children, his possessions, and even his friends. Such a magnitude of loss would be devastating, but Job didn’t see it as surprising.

His testimony shares the stark reality of living in a fallen world. Job said, *Man who is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble (Job 14:1).*

It’s not necessarily true that we are being singled out or facing something out of the ordinary. Difficulty is to be expected because life is troubled.

WE ARE NOT ALONE

If we feel that we are isolated in our circumstances, we’ve lost sight of the most critical certainty of all—God is still there, even when the bottom drops out of our world.

In Hebrews 13:5-6, we read:

*Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.”* So we may

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boldly say: “The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?”
When life becomes overwhelming, there’s nothing more important than knowing that we don’t face those burdens alone. God is there.

WE HAVE RESOURCES BEYOND OURSELVES
In Matthew 6:33, Jesus spoke to people who were fearful. They were also uncertain about how they would live and how their needs would be met. Jesus wanted them to look higher when He said,

Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

It may be that the pressures we feel are a result of pursuing the wrong goals. A right relationship with

God is significant because of who He is, and because a relationship with Him is the one thing in life that lasts forever. In Him, we have an eternal supply that this world cannot destroy.

OUR PAIN CAN GROW OUR FAITH
We dread pain, largely because we see it as so negative. The fact is, however, that our struggles can provide opportunities for us to grow in ways that times of ease could never produce. The apostle Paul wrote:

We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us. We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed—always carrying about in the body

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the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body (2 Cor. 4:7-10). If you know Christ, you can be assured that you serve the God who doesn’t waste anything—including the pain of job loss.

OUR PAIN CAN HELP OTHERS
Not only can our struggles help us to grow, they can also provide an opportunity to help others. Our experiences can give us the background to help others when the pain of job loss visits them. To that end, Paul wrote:

_Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God (2 Cor. 1:3-4)._ We are never so well equipped to help hurting people as when we ourselves have experienced pain and loss. Then we can take God’s encouragement and share it with others.

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**We are never so well equipped to help hurting people as when we ourselves have experienced pain and loss.**

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THIS IS NOT THE END
When we face a serious life crisis, like losing a job, it can seem like the end of the world, that life will never be good again, and that there’s nothing left to live for.

Be assured, however, that it’s not the end. Paul wrote:
I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us (Rom. 8:18).

Whatever dark experiences we face in this life, one day they will be overwhelmed by the perfect and complete reality of eternity in the presence of the Christ who loves us and gave Himself for us.

GOD’S LOVE IS REAL

When we are going through seasons of trial and hurt, it’s easy to question whether God loves us at all. The experience of loss, however, is not capable of disrupting His love for us. Paul said:

I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other

created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 8:38-39).

Separation from a job is a crushing, heartbreaking event. It is not, however, what matters most. Nothing in all the universe can separate us from the love of God—and that does matter the most.

HOPE IN THE DARK

Where do we get hope from? I believe that there’s hope in many of the things we find in everyday life.

My wife and my family have given me a great amount of hope. When I look at all the people I’m involved with in my life, I see hope and optimism. I see people who are living in a productive and happy
way—even though they may have hit some bumps along the way like everyone else. Still, they have a resiliency that enables them to go on.

But there’s more to hope than good wishes and optimistic points of view. For me, my faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is the anchor of my hope. He is my rock and my foundation. I have confidence that He loves me and is greater than any of the challenges or disappointments that I face. It’s my conviction that He is in control, and that He never fails.

If you don’t know Christ as your Savior, perhaps the crisis of losing your job has come about to show you that life is too big for you to handle on your own, and that there are issues of life that cannot be fixed with human hands.

In our sin, weakness, and need, we are drawn to the God who gave His Son so that we could be forgiven of our sins and wrongdoings and made whole. We can be a part of His family.

You can find that wholeness only at the foot of the cross. As we are told in the most familiar verse in the Bible:

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life (Jn. 3:16).

Trust in the Lord Jesus Christ today—not because you need a job, but because you need Him.

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