

Fired? Get Fired Up!

Mark Alan Leslie

# **Fired? Get Fired Up!**

By Mark Alan Leslie

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## Foreword

“You’re fired!”  
“You can’t fire me. I’m under verbal contract.”  
“That contract isn’t worth the paper it was printed on. You’re still fired!”

— From the 1935 movie *I Live for Love*

“You’re fired!”

The words are simple, direct, no-nonsense—and devastatingly brutal.

One man who fired me actually added, pointing a finger in that direction, “There’s the door!”

Have you heard these words before? They can stick with you, ruining your self-confidence, putting your livelihood in peril, endangering your marriage, souring your life.

Getting fired or otherwise losing your job can be devastating. It ranks right up there behind the death of a loved one and divorce. The trauma can be almost a physical force—a breathtaking blow to the mid-section.

I know. I say jokingly that I’m now an expert at getting fired; it has happened to me three times. I take heart from the comment by television news lady Linda Ellerby, “I don’t trust anyone in the news business unless they’ve been fired at least three times.”

But, because of a loving God and many Christian friends, I also know how to survive that firing, lay-off, or the school system’s and professional sports teams’ favorite term: “non-renewal of contract.”

Let’s explore how to handle losing your job, dealing with the mental and physical pain, and coming out on top ... or, better still, leaving your job for a better one before you lose it.



*“Expecting the world not to hurt you because you’re an honest person is like expecting the bull not to charge you because you’re a vegetarian.”*

— Rabbi Harold Kushner

## Chapter One

### Too Tough To Take?

One person’s reaction was to go to bed for three days—that’s **three days**—in a deep depression. The other mentally cartwheeled into the future, full of joy at the prospects of a new life.

The two men are acquaintances of mine, the first in Monmouth, Maine, the other in San Diego, Calif. The first had been fired from the company he had created, made prosper and then lost. The second was pressured into early retirement (he was 50) from what he considered “the best job in the phone company in California.”

Their opposite reactions represent those of countless thousands of people around the world who are losing jobs every day, their lives being tossed into turmoil.

It doesn’t matter how well or poorly you do your job. “Getting the boot” can happen to you. It is all too real—as you may know.

According to the U.S. Department of Labor, more than 3 million workers are “displaced” every year. And the Bureau of Labor Statistics reports there is a trend toward more part-time workers and less permanent attachment of employers to their employees.

There is as much turnover of executives and other key people during a recession as a growth period, according to the New England-based outplacement firm of McKenna, Jandl & Associates (MJA).

During good times, dynamic companies are often re-organizing, changing direction, launching new products and bringing in new management, MJA says, adding, “This usually means displacement of key people.”

The Lynnfield, Mass., firm says that when new management or a new boss comes into a company or a division, “repeated experience shows that executive heads will probably roll within the next six months.” It’s like the business world’s answer to France’s guillotine. But while Dr. J.I. Guillotin dreamed up the guillotine as a humane way to kill prisoners facing the death penalty, modern-day bosses don’t always think humanely when they make heads roll.

MJA says many executives lose jobs under new management because the boss wants his own people in key positions; but furthermore he might view established incumbents, especially the best or strongest ones, as threats to his position or leadership. The result is that executives and other key people lose their jobs in good times as well as bad.

Examples are all around us—probably on the street where you live, perhaps in your own family. High-tech, low-tech, middle-tech, it doesn’t matter what are the roots of the business, or even industry for that matter. The travel and resort industries since “911.” The computer business since before then. Consider the young man who worked hard to finally win a promotion to manage a Gemco store. He lost his job because Lucky, under a threat from a takeover artist, believed that it no longer had the time to gussy up its Gemco chain and get it healthy. It closed the chain, and the young manager and others were out of jobs.

Consider the longtime public-affairs director of a medium-size food chain that boasted that it treated its employees like family. The company was sold, and a new male boss fired her but told her not to worry: She could always stay home and get pregnant.

Takeovers and corporate restructuring have left tens of thousands without jobs. Restructuring could be important in keeping a company healthy—if it were done rationally and with adequate consideration. But, oftentimes, we see that companies are abandoning sensible long-term growth strategies to meet the needs of the moment.

Cutting loose long-term strategies, however, has hidden long-term costs. It is people who punch the time clocks, run the machinery and make the decisions that keep business going. People are the lifeblood of any successful organization.

In his book, *The Frontiers of Management*, Peter Drucker says: “There is a good deal of evidence that people in an organization ... will accept even the most painful adjustment, such as the closing of a business or the sale of parts of it, if the rationale is economic performance or the lack thereof.”

Many people are calling for a look at the rights of the workforce. One of those is the implied right of a person, once employed, not to be fired for unjust cause. Over the last decade courts have been restricting employers’ ability to fire at will. That protection may not help you or me, but it may help many like us in the days ahead.

I, for one, have found out that anyone can get fired, no matter how long or how well you have been doing your job.

Even United States presidents aren’t immune, are they? How close were the Andrew Jackson and Bill Clinton impeachment votes?

Between April 2001 and April 2002 the national unemployment rate rose from 4.8 to 6.0 percent, pushing the count from 6,742,000 by another 483,000 people whose heads rolled—many guillotined by “intangible changes” in their companies.

Unemployment rates have improved since then, but a great many of people who have lost their jobs over the years have been shocked—some even driven to suicide. Yet 86 percent of Americans do not even like their jobs and would prefer another. They dislike the duties they have to perform, or the person they are working for, or the company, or the place, or the work schedule. For one reason or another they would like to be somewhere else.

In those cases they should indeed be in another job. Should **you** be in another job?

Let's look at your specific situation. Ask yourself if you will lose your job. **Have** you lost it? Or, perhaps more importantly, should you be looking for another job—even if you wouldn't be fired or laid off?

If “yes” or “I don't know” answers either of these questions, here is some advice: Walk with the Lord; He will show you the way and allay your fears. That is a promise He has made to believers. All we have to do is **have faith** and ask God to provide the answers to our job dilemmas. He will.

The Word of God assures us of this in many verses.

John tells us in I John 5:14:

*“This is the assurance we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us – whatever we ask – we know that we have what we asked of him.”*

In I Peter 5:7-10 Peter says:

*“Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.*

*“And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.”*

And Luke 12:28-31 quotes Jesus as saying:

*“If that (splendor) is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today, and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith! And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them. But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well.”*

I speak to the issue of losing your job not just because I have friends—several of whom I will tell you about—who have lost their jobs, but because it has also happened to me—three times—and I've reacted in quite different ways. In 1976 I was shocked, terrified and scared—mostly scared. I was, in fact, a wreck.

What was I to do to care for my wife and two children? In 1986 I was relieved and calm, sure that it was the best thing. And in 2000 I was only upset that I hadn't heard God's “still small voice,” followed the desires of my heart and left that position years before.

Why the difference? I mean, I still had a wife. I still had two children; only now they were older, and in the third case even out of the house and on their own. And now my mortgage payments were six times what they were in 1976, the car payments three times as much, etc., etc.

The difference: I was saved and born again in 1982, and loved and worshipped the Lord.

Now, God was getting my tithes whereas before He got a buck and how-de-do, if anything at all, since more than often than not I wasn't in church on Sundays and didn't support any charities, Christian or otherwise.

The difference: The first time I had no one but family to fall back on, no beliefs strong enough to ease my fear. I was **in** the world and **of** the world: I knew the word "spiritual" but could not have adequately defined it, if asked. The second time, I was surrounded by strongly Christian family and friends, was close to God, and was sure in the knowledge of His provision. The third time, I knew that not only did God want me out of my job but that I had not listened to Him when He had urged me to follow my own heart, that those urgings to start my own business were from His Spirit, that He had still even better things in store for me and my wife.

When I was fired after three years as news director at Colby College, a small liberal arts school in Maine, I was operating on chance in planning for the future.

The second time around, when I was fired after 10 years as city editor of a daily newspaper in Maine at the age of 38, I was operating on high-octane faith—that basic ingredient that keeps our lives going on the road to the Lord. But God knew that I was stifling, even if I didn't want to face that knowledge myself.

The third time around, when I was fired after 11 years as an editor with *Golf Course News* and *Golf Course News-International*, trade publications for the golf industry, I had been struggling for five or six years about leaving to start my own public-relations firm. I had hemmed and hawed, filled with what-ifs and yes-buts. Afraid of failure, even despite "knowing" God would provide. No perfect Christian, me. That high-octane during the time of the second firing might have been diluted by the enemy of my faith. But I have learned. If you have an urge from the Holy Spirit, He did not put that in you for you to squelch it. Remember the warning: Don't squelch the Holy Spirit!

By a large degree, your beliefs and actions, and those of the people in your immediate world will determine how you will survive losing your job.

It can happen to anyone. Just as that charging bull doesn't care if you're a vegetarian, your boss may not care if you're a Christian, or even preach the Word of God on your off-hours—which I sometimes do.

Indeed, since I lost my job the second time, I have met a number of fellow Christians who have lost their jobs, been forced into early retirement, and even pressured into selling their interest in a business.

One friend, in fact, said she has seen in her very large circle of Christian friends that many are facing difficult times. "It is like the devil is testing us all," she said.

Jesus warned His disciples, then and now, that they would be persecuted but promised "he who stands firm to the end will be saved." (Matthew 10:22)

For whatever reason a person loses his or her job, the fact is, it happens a lot. Because of the great number of job losses and their effects on all of us—those who lose our jobs, or know of a family member or friend who has lost theirs, or even the person doing the firing—let's look at the entire picture.

The job and what it means to us; our reaction to losing the job; our **action** once the job is lost; leaving our job for a better one before we lose the one we have; the spouse's response; and the result of all of this.



*“I am come that they might have life and have it to the full.”*

-- Jesus Christ (John 10:10b)

## **Chapter Two**

### **Pizzazzless, Punchless or Perfect**

Perhaps you should be in another job. Have you thought about it? Has your job lost its excitement, its pizzazz? Are your co-workers intolerable. Is the pressure too much? Do you feel like you are losing your grip on sanity? And then there's this question that stands alone: Are you haunted by the person you might have been?

Here's one question that will answer it all quickly: Are you looking to the end of work on Friday earlier each week? Whereas you at first didn't consider the weekend's possibilities until Thursday or Friday, is it now Tuesday or Wednesday—or, as it was in my case, even on Monday?

Analyze how you feel about your job. Actually scrutinize every detail of the position: your duties, pressures, subordinates, bosses, work hours, deadlines, everything about it.

It could be worse, right? Admit it. But perhaps it could be better, too.

One person who figured this out is the Rev. Carl Shelton, who in 1982 created SHARE, the Self-Help and Resource Exchange in San Diego.

Shelton is a former executive who sold his contracting business and dropped out of the rat race.

he said: “There came a time in my career when I started asking myself, ‘If I increase my income 100 percent, will I be a success?’ “

So Shelton began a journey that took him into the ordained ministry of the Roman Catholic Church, and which in turn took him to Calcutta, India, with Nobel Peace laureate Mother Teresa and back to San Diego to start SHARE, a food-distribution organization that evolved from a tailgate business to an international operation helping feed the hungry.

The point Carl Shelton reached has or will be before many of us. Here is a way station—maybe the most critical one of our careers. If you have not lost your job you have two choices:

- 1) Improve the position to make it not only tolerable but enjoyable and productive.
- 2) Get out.

Whichever you choose, though, you must first consult God. Do you have a working relationship with the Lord? If not, there is no better time than now to cultivate one. We ignore His Word and His help only at our own peril. And it's there for the asking.

Too many of us think of God as a Supreme Being out there Who doesn't care or have the time for each of us puny little human beings down here on Earth. Right? Wrong!

William Jennings Bryan wrote: "If the Father deigns to touch with divine power the cold and pulseless heart of the buried acorn and to make it burst forth from its prison walls, will He leave neglected in the earth the soul of man made in the image of his Creator?"

Of course He won't. We are, after all, His ultimate creation.

But we must make the first move toward Him. William Holman Hunt painted the famous "The Light of the World" with Jesus knocking at a door. Told that he had forgotten the doorknob in the painting, Hunt replied that it was on the inside of the door... We let Jesus into our lives; He doesn't just walk in.

As it says in Revelation 3:20:

*"Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him and he with me."*

James A. Pike said: "When we raise our hand to take God's hand, He does take our hand."

"Trust and obey and I will show you the way," Jesus said.

History is filled with people who trusted, obeyed, had faith, and were shown the way by the Lord. They were led by that faith, the "being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see." (Hebrews 11:1)

By faith Abraham, who was old, and Sarah, who was barren, had a child and their descendants are "as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore." (Hebrews 11:12b)

By faith Joseph, near death, told of the Israelites' exit from Egypt. Moses, by faith, refused to be known as the son of Pharaoh's daughter and lived, mistreated with his people, the Israelites; and by that faith he led a nation out of Egypt and through the Red Sea.

Joshua, who took Moses' place, brought the Israelites into the land of promise and their first great obstacle, the conquest of Jericho, was overcome by faith without a battle.

Hebrews 11:32-34 says:

*"And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel and the prophets, who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies."*

Paul wrote the Philippians: "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:6-7)

Surely, if you trust the Lord, He will show you the path to follow; He certainly has the track record to prove it.

Are you satisfied where you are? Should you look for another job? You couldn't ask for a better counselor than He Who created everything.

The worst thing you could do would be to quickly jump into a new job without seeking wisdom from He Who gave that precious gift to Solomon. You could wind up like the Chinese merchant Wan-Hoo.

Wan-Hoo several centuries ago was one of the first men to try space flight—and he should have sought God's advice first. According to the story, Wan-Hoo tied two large kites to a saddle which rested on a large circular platform affixed to 47 small powder rockets. He sat up on the saddle and signaled 47 coolies to light the rockets simultaneously. The ensuing explosion and fire incinerated poor Wan-Hoo and ended his dream—forever.

It's crucial to seek God's counsel and discover His will. Because He has a will for believers—a mantle for each and every one of us to pick up. Ephesians 2:10 says: "For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

But how do you know God's will? When I was young I used to pick up the Bible and say, "God, if You have a message for me, have me open this book up to the correct page." And when I had opened it up I would say, "Now, have me point my finger to the right verse."

Every once in awhile it actually seemed to work. But I believe God has a better plan for us to get in tune with His Word than pick-and-point.

It comes down to this: Know God and you know His will. And that doesn't necessarily come easily. Like "Sunday Christians" who feel that all they have to do to fulfill their positions as Christians is to attend church on Sundays, people are wrong if they believe that occasional Bible-reading is sufficient. It isn't. Read the Bible, read it, read it, and read it some more.

Put down that detective novel or spy thriller and pick up the Bible. You might have to resort to something new and different. Some Bibles are very difficult for some people to understand. Many people love the King James version. For me, it had become a drudgery; I did not look forward to reading it, and neither did my wife, Loy. We had four or five Bibles in the house, including a couple of King Jameses and a couple of New International Versions, and none of them were getting read.

We took a drive to our local Bible bookstore and bought "The Book," a "thought-for-thought translation" of the Bible that became a staple in our household for awhile. The Book reads like a novel.

But, Loy decided she wanted to know the Word more in-depth. So, we visited our Bible bookstore and bought an Amplified Bible. This version does exactly what its title infers. It amplified, giving you the full meaning of the Greek and Hebrew Words.

For example, I John 2:3 in the NIV says: "We know that we have come to know Him if we obey His commands."

The Amplified Bible expounds on the full meaning of the original letter: "And this is how we may discern [daily by experience] that we are coming to know Him—to perceive, recognize, understand and become better acquainted with Him: If we keep (bear in mind, observe practice) His teachings (precepts, commandments)."

That Bible has become an appendage of Loy. We would have to surgically remove it to get it away from her.,

Then came my turn. It has become dangerous to my wallet to go near that Bible bookstore. One day we were in town and the Lord had Loy direct me to the bookstore. Piled six feet high on the first table as we entered was a Godsend: the brand-new NIV Study Bible which later became the top-selling Bible and Christian Book of the Year. It is loaded with

maps, diagrams and pertinent information for a majority of the verses, 100,000 cross-references, a concordance, an introduction and outline of each book, and much more. Sound like a salesman? I sometimes feel like one when I rave to an acquaintance about it. You see, Loy bought one for me and I fell in love—with God’s Word.

And that’s the ultimate, isn’t it? Loving God’s Word.

Now we have, it seems, one of every kind of Bible in our home—King James, New King James, NIV, Thompson’s Chain Reference Bible, Hebrew New Testament, Greek-Hebrew KJV, Aramaic translation, Spiritual Life Bible, The Good New Bible, the Book... The list goes on, but each one gets used in our studies. One of these ought to be perfect for you.

We both have a thirst for that Word now. I used to dread reading the Bible. Now it’s what I naturally pick up when I want to do some enjoyable reading as well as serious stuff. It fills both those bills, serious and fun.

So, whatever version you enjoy most, read one of them. Jesus did not speak Queen’s English, you know; and neither did He speak like we do today. That doesn’t matter; it’s what His words meant that matters, and that Word is the same yesterday, today and forever.

That takes us back to the question of knowing God’s will. There are several ways to do that. First, know the Bible.

Second, tune in to the scriptures you are reading to see if they relate to your present circumstances. Sometimes a verse will jump out at you, hit you right between the eyes and say: “Look here! Stop and look!” That will be a *rheyma*, a word from God to you.

Third, the Holy Spirit will speak to you if you are Spirit-filled (and in the last chapter we will discuss how to give your life over to God if you have not done so already). The Holy Spirit is our Comforter, our Advocate, our Revelator. He gives us revelations, and the more sensitive we become to Him, the more He dwells in us.

Fourth, practice at practicing God’s laws. The more you live under those laws, letting the precepts of His will run your life, maturing in the process of being a Christian, growing in His love, seeking and obeying Him, the more you will know good from evil. And the more easily you will be able to discern what His will is for you to do.

Fifth, pray and specifically ask God to give you a scripture verse that will answer your particular question. The closer you get to Him, the more this seems to work. The Lord answers our questions like this all the time. I have actually stopped being amazed at how precise He is with these scriptural answers. But don’t expect those answers to come immediately. Many times it take 10 minutes, 20 minutes, an hour of intense, non-stop prayer, speaking to God in tongues if He has given you that gift, before that scripture comes. But it inevitably does.

Sixth, consult other Christians. If they are living in the Word they are in tune with God—and they also have the advantage of being able to look at your situation from a more removed angle than you yourself can.

Seventh, dreams, visions and the voice of the Holy Spirit carry counsel the world over every second of the day. Don’t scoff at a person who says, “I saw a vision.” Some Christian denominations teach that visions, dreams, indeed healings and miracles and prophecy and tongues, passed on with the original disciples. Well, we are Jesus’ disciples, too. Indeed, we are co-heirs with Christ, and we can be blessed with those gifts just as James and John and Peter and the others were. A list of healings and other miracles that have occurred since Jesus ascended to the right hand of His Father would stretch from here to the throne of God Himself.

Try before going to bed at night just asking God to visit a dream upon you in your sleep. Then, in the peace of the Spirit, drift off to sleep and expect that dream—and the interpretation which will answer your question.

Eighth, look at the circumstances. Look at what has happened to you, how it happened, the timing, everything. then look at your job possibilities. **Then** ask the question: “Are all these happenings leading to one direction, one place?” God has always maneuvered things, you know do you think He will stop now? No. And you can bet the bank on that. God has promised to give to us, His children, out of His abundance.

And finally, if we have the peace of the Holy Spirit in us—and the calm and ease that entails—we will know that we are out of the Spirit when we lose that peace. We will feel out of sync. It is our gyroscope.

Above all, we must trust in the will of God. Remember Ephesians 2:10? “For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”

There is a plan prescribed for us by the good, acceptable and practical will of God. But since He has given us all free will, it is our responsibility to take the actions to conform to that will.

....

If the message you get is to move, do so. Losing a job can, in fact, be the best thing for an individual whose career is going nowhere in the position they are in. It can give you a chance to make a positive career move, step up a notch or several notches.

There are hundreds of placement services that can help you find a job, if indeed you want any help along that line. There are also Christian organizations that specialize in the Christian job marketplace: Intercristo and Tentmakers International, both headquartered at 19303 Fremont Avenue North, Seattle, Washington 98133; and DACI, located at 2995 LBJ Freeway, Suite 206W, Dallas, Texas 75234.

Intercristo says it will personally match your qualifications with tens of thousands of job openings in Christian organizations in the United States and throughout the world.

Tentmakers will find you a secular job in most any country in the world, its purpose being to spread God’s Word that way.

DACI will give you advice if you are starting your own Christian enterprise.

In whatever way you make your job move, a change is definitely possible.

“Difficult employment situations will not solve themselves,” says James E. Challenger, president of Challenger, Gray & Christmas, Inc. in Chicago, Illinois, the nation’s oldest firm specializing in job, career and lifestyle transition consulting. “The result is trained tolerance of a poor performance, from which neither the company nor employee profits.”<sup>1</sup>

Discounting lateral transfer, demotion and early retirement as viable alternative, Challenger suggests that “getting fired can be the kindest cut” of all.

“Identity crisis. Identity crises!” you say?

“I **am** my job,” you say?

“I’ve been a pharmacist all these years; that’s what I am; that’s my identity,” you say?

“Take that away and what is left?” you ask?

First and foremost, you are much, much more than a job title. You are much, much more than the duties you perform as a receptionist or legal secretary or banker or nurse or truck driver or city administrator—or whatever. First and foremost, you were created with special attributes that even the great philosophers haven’t been able to fathom. You can do or be

anything you want. After all, you were created in the image of God. How could you have any greater attributes than that?

Second, it was not meant that your job be the all-consuming force in your life. What should be, then? Your spouse? Your children? Your parents? Your home or car or hobbies? No, no, no—five, six, seven times over. Sure, a husband should love his wife as Jesus does His church. And sure enough, a parent should raise up their children strong in the Lord. But did you notice the center of the above two sentences? Jesus, our Lord and Savior. He is the key.

“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16)

Will your job give you everlasting life? Will your family, or hobby, or television?

In Matthew 19:29, Jesus is quoted as saying “... everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields for my sake will receive a hundred times as much and will inherit eternal life.”

Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life. And it is He Who should be that all-consuming force in your life.

Even if you had everything in the world, all the **things** money could buy, you wouldn't be **whole** unless you knew Jesus personally. Jesus said, in Mark 10:24b-25: “Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.”

If you possess everything, yet know not God, than you really have only temporal things of the world.

Former Boston Red Sox pitcher Roger Clemens struck out an all-time record 20 hitters in one game in May 1986 en route to a Most Valuable Player and Cy Young Award-winning season. He said later that it was not as important to him what he was in the eyes of the baseball world as it was what he was in the eyes of his wife and parents.

Fame, once you have it, is not so important. (Neither is money if you don't use it well.)

So, you got fired? Say, “Hooray!” Kick up your heels, be thankful and look forward to a new challenge. Don't live in the past or off past accomplishments. Roger Clemens is a parallel here. His priority was not what the world thought of him. His main focus was not what he had done. That was in the past. Rather, he said he wanted to have a long and successful career as well as be a good husband and father.

God wants that, too. He wants you to be successful, and He wants to help.

If your identity is tied too closely to your job, expand your interests. But, more importantly, re-evaluate your priorities. Don't **be** your job.

Too many people **are** just that. And when they lose that job it is a disaster. Studies have shown that people who undergo devastating job and financial experiences have 2-1/2 times the risk that others run of having a psychological disorder. Child abuse, alcoholism and wife-beating also increase significantly during recessionary times. <sup>2</sup>

People losing their jobs are obviously an ugly lot, by and large. Yet, does that stand to reason since most of them don't like those jobs in the first place?

For the child- and wife-abusers and those who go into deep depression, a job loss that can become an opportunity becomes a crisis. During this crisis, a person can have either heightened potential or be even more vulnerable—letting in morale-eating feelings like self-doubt and inferiority, loss of self-image, distress and myriad others.

Maxine C. Gaylord, C.S.W., and Estelle B. Symons, C.S.W., industrial and clinical social workers who have provided workshops, counseling, training and consulting to corporations

and individuals throughout the greater New York area, say that if the stresses created by the change are not coped with, psychological problems may occur.<sup>3</sup>

They say an individual's response to job loss or job change is determined by six elements:

"1. Both the individual's ability to cope with stress and his or her personality structure affect whether old psychological conflicts are activated or new conflicts arise as a result of the change at hand.

"2. The response is influenced by the meaning of the job to the individual. Because work is such a central daily activity, an employee's very identity can be threatened by impending job loss or change.

"3. The context in which the change occurs has its effect. Was the job change voluntary or involuntary? How the transition came about affects the depth of the person's emotional reaction—triggering a range of response from mild stress to severe crisis.

"4. The extent and effectiveness of the individual's support network make a difference, too. People in stages of transition need more support—often when their sources of support are diminished.

"5. The age of the person undergoing the change has an influence. The mid-life period is the worst age in this respect; it is a period of reassessment and reflection for many people. Career change during this time often activates more intense emotional distress.

"6. The dual-career issue can have either a positive or a negative effect. Ordinarily, careers for both marriage partners can provide both a hedge against inflation and an opportunity for career risk-taking. But dual careers can also challenge a marriage's equilibrium when one partner undergoes a job loss or change. This change in status can lead to feelings of low self-esteem for the husband or wife affected."

Ms. Gaylord and Ms. Symons place individuals losing jobs into three categories: the "assertives" on one extreme, the "conflicted" in the middle and the "can't copes" at the other extreme.

The "assertives," they say, are "those whose defenses, coping skills, identity, and support network are sufficient to cope with the stress and challenge inherent in either a voluntary or involuntary job change." These people usually need only career guidance, resume' writing and interviewing skills to find a new job.

The "conflicted," they say, are "in touch with the stress that job change produces. People in this group will make voluntary change, but need help in the decision-making process to deal with their ambivalence and fear of failure."

If "conflicteds" voluntarily change their jobs they are fine, but if the change is involuntary, they may "experience anxiety, anger, depression and disequilibrium," Ms. Gaylord and Ms. Symons say. For these people, the turmoil experienced can be a "traumatic and devastating experience."

The "conflicteds," the women say, need both practical and emotional counseling because "until their feelings of grief can be resolved, little can be done about career planning."

The final group, the "can't copes," do not voluntarily leave their jobs. "They are usually people who place great emphasis on security and a familiar environment, and they tend to be threatened by any change, whether positive or negative."

Much of what was said about the "conflicteds" is true even to a greater degree for the "can't copes," they say.

These two experts obviously know their subjects and the people they have to deal with.

True, to many of us, losing our job is devastating—a mind-boggling cruncher. But it can be a wonderful life-changer, letting sunlight in where it hasn't been in years, opening up new

horizons in challenges and interests. You can find your mind whizzing along with new ideas. You might have thought that your old job had drained every last bit of creativity from you, but new prospects crack open that seed of creativity and, like a plant, it grows.

The job change can be a positive—or it can be a negative ... make that a **big** positive or a **big** negative.

Look for the bright side. A friend of mine whose legs are paralyzed always amazed me by his upbeat nature, his excitement for life. When I asked him once how he could keep so positive about everything, he told me that when he feels depressed about this paralysis he thinks about the paraplegics in the world and counts himself lucky.

Remember the character Jimmy Stewart played in “*It’s a Wonderful Life*”? Life had dealt him one terrible blow right after another for years. His one great dream when he was growing up was to travel the world. But the day he was to leave, his father died. That death sent into disarray his loan business that had kept many people financially afloat. So, being a mature, responsible young man, Stewart stayed home. He put off his life’s ambition and kept his father’s business—and the town—going.

He changed his plan so that he would put his younger brother through college prepared to assume control of the business and **then** leave to travel the world. But again he took a kick in the teeth when his brother graduated and refused to assume control of the business; he himself wanted to go elsewhere.

Because Jimmy Stewart’s character was a bastion of good against the town bank’s bastion of evil—a man who wanted to take over the community—Jimmy again had to stay on. Then, sorrow of sorrows, he fell in love; they had a family and Jimmy was tied down forever.

That realization, years later, led him to the brink of jumping off a bridge into the freezing river below. But along came an angel (in man’s clothing) who showed Jimmy what he had accomplished in his town over the years and what the town would have come to if Jimmy had not stayed there. It would have been one long strip of sin—a haven of sex, booze and gambling.

True, there had been hard times for him, but, my, what a wonderful effect his life had had on the town and its people. His good deeds had, in fact, saved his hometown.

That movie teaches a strong lesson about being down and out, destitute, depressed, suicidal.

We all have the capabilities of having the profound effect on the world around us that Jimmy Stewart’s character had in that movie. All we have to do is take that first **positive** step.

Consider Job. The Old Testament book about him is filled with as much pain and frustration as any other in the bible. Job was what God called “a righteous man.” God told Satan: “There is no one on earth like him (Job); he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil.”

But Satan said he could get Job to loathe the Lord, and the challenge was on. Satan destroyed everything Job owned, taking his children, having armies conquer his lands and carry off his flocks. But Job continued to love the Lord and praise Him.

So Satan afflicted Job with sores from his head to his feet. Job’s reply when his wife told him to “curse God and die” was: “Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?”

Job knew that he had not sinned, yet still asked God for forgiveness if he had. He suffered through terrible tragedy—far worse than you or I have ever known—and he suffered for a long time. But he persevered. He held fast to his faith in the Lord. Job told God: “I know that You can do all things; no plan of Yours can be thwarted.” (Job 42:2, NIV)



And the Lord rewarded Job by making him twice as prosperous as he had been before and giving him seven sons and three beautiful daughters.

Praise God!

*An Ass and an Ape were grumbling together; the Ass complaining that he had no horns, and the Ape that he had no tail.*

*“Be quiet,” said a Mole who was listening, “stop grumbling and be grateful for what you have. We poor moles, who are quite blind, are worse off than any of you!”*

-- Aesop's Fable

## **Chapter Three**

### **Choose: Joy or Despair**

The miracle God has blessed us with, that is always with us, is the strength to cope with life's problems. And He has promised never to give us more than we can handle.

I Corinthians 10:13b says:

*“And God is faithful; He will not let you be tempted [tried] beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted [tried] he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.”*

When my newspaper publisher fired me as city editor in February 1986—after nine years in that job—I was for a brief few minutes in a state of shock. I recall having to stand outside in the cold winter air to be able to breath.

Throughout that first day, my feelings wandered off and on, good and bad, joyful and in despair. On the one hand, I was let out of this uncaring organization; on the other hand, I was out of a job ... and with a wife and two children to take care of, a home, a new car, et al, the weekly paycheck loomed ever more important. At one moment I was startled; at another, gleeful.

I was to a great extent one of those people whose job is them. Added to that was the fact that the reporters I worked with were like a second family to me. And I was losing that family as well as the job. That hurt.

Yet, with friends comes help. My wife and children were wonderful when told of my firing. Add to that the help of my friends and the entire experience was tremendous, at times exhilarating.

This may or may not be a revealing insight, but reporters and editors—most who are in the news business—are pessimists ... and proud of it, I might add. Perhaps they see the world through brackish glasses. I know some of that feeling lived in me. It had lived in me to a great extent until two years before my firing—until the time I found the Lord, or he found me.

But my attitude changed over those two years.

Thank God that, unlike an agnostic, atheist or humanist, I as a faith-believing Christian had Someone besides myself to rely on—Someone far greater than any mere mortal.

But I didn't go to Him first.

The first thing I did (and I'm not recommending or condemning this) was to meet with one of my reporters. He reviled; I reviled. He tore down the management; I tore down and purged all the remaining disgust from me—or so I thought. Bits and snatches would now and again emerge over the next few days, and even months, even though most of that bad feeling was gone for good, buried under six feet of whitewash. The people, I still loved. The job—which **was** me—I had forgotten. Had it existed at all? I didn't even pause to ponder.

To this day, I get reports on how poor the situation is for people at that newspaper. Immediately after I was fired, I felt good about that sort of news, like “it serves the owner right.” But now I just feel sorry about the place and sometimes put the owner in my prayers; if God can forgive him, am I above it? If God still loves him and holds hope for him, can't I, also? I couldn't, at first. Man whitewashes, but God washes white.

And that's part of the lesson of this. Meet with a co-worker, a friend and **lit it out!** Scream. Holler. Whatever you have to do, do it to cleanse your system.

Feelings of shame, self-doubt, inferiority, embarrassment—all powerful feelings—can scramble your brain if you don't watch out. They can weaken your self-image. And they can weaken your resolve. That is the road to utter destruction.

So, get the garbage out. **Then** never let it back inside you again. It's gone.

Sometimes those feelings run so strong and so deep, and the hurt is so painful that we can not forget on our own. That is when we are so lucky we believe in God, because that is when we can turn it all over to Him. Just tell God, “I can't handle it myself, Lord. I've tried and I've failed. I want to forget. Thank You for taking the load off my shoulders and the weight off my mind.” Then believe He has taken the load for you, believe, and it will be done.

Harold Hill, who until his retirement was president of Curtis Engine Co. in Baltimore, Maryland, told of his experience in his wonderful book, *“How To Live Like a King's Kid.”*

One of the obstacles he faced was a poker addiction. As much as he tried, Harold couldn't quit the habit. So, finally he said, “Lord, if I really belong to You completely, this gambling habit is Yours, not mine.” He didn't ask God to help him win games, but invited Him along, to sit in with him.

Harold said: “Lord, if You like sitting in on poker games, that's Your privilege, because when I'm sitting in, You're sitting in. And if that's pleasing to You, fine. I'm going to forget all about it.”

Instead of fighting his gambling habit, Harold started loosing it to God. Then, a couple of weeks later, he went on a fishing trip with several men and they played poker. Harold won every game. He couldn't lose, raking in every pot.

“Normally,” he said, “I would have been tickled to death. But as the pile of chips grew higher and higher in front of me, I became more and more miserable. I knew the men playing

with me couldn't afford to lose. I was taking their rent money, their grocery money, money for their children's trips to the orthodontist."

But when you're in the middle of a poker game, you can't just quit; the ethics of the game demand you continue on.

When that weekend was finally over, Harold was so sick with what he had done that he didn't ever want to play poker again. He didn't have to fight that desire any more; it was gone.

So, whatever you're struggling with—be it my problem with forgiveness, or Harold Hill's addiction to gambling—you can hand it to the Lord and let Him wash it away.

The Bible tells us we must have no hatred within us or our prayers won't be answered. Mark 11:25 says:

*"And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins."*

Do not hold a grudge. God will deal with people who handle others badly.

"For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and His ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil."

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow wrote: "If we could read the secret history of our enemies, we should find in each man's life, sorrow and suffering enough to disarm all hostility."

Besides, if you let bad feelings fester, then you have no room for good feelings.

Everything must be positive.

Jesus said in Matthew 5:44-48:

*"But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even the pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect."*

And John wrote in I John 2:9-11:

*"Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness. Whoever loves his brother lives in the light, and there is nothing in him to make him stumble. But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness; he does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded him"*

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Among the most uplifting things that happened to me immediately after I lost my job were my friends' reactions, a couple of them in particular.

I called Roger Landry on the telephone, told him I had been fired, and he said: "Praise the Lord! Glory!"

Was I upset that Roger did not commiserate with me? "Praise God for losing my job? Is he nuts?" No, I didn't think that. I was uplifted ... and I praise the Lord for something else besides losing my job. I praise Him for Roger; and for Roger's wife, Sally.

I also praise Him for Pat Stuart, a lady I worked with at the newspaper. Pat heard I had been let go, and while I was in the office that night saying my good-byes, she gave me a page filled with two Bible verses she had typed up for me: Psalm 86 and Luke 11:9-10.

Psalm 86 reads:

*“Hear, O Lord, and answer me, for I am poor and needy. Guard my life, for I am devoted to you. Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I call to you all day long. Bring joy to your servant, for to you, O Lord, I lift up my soul. You are forgiving and good, O Lord, abounding in love to all who call on you. Hear my prayer, O Lord; listen to my cry for mercy. In the day of my trouble I will call to you, for you will answer me. Among the gods there is none like You. O Lord; no deeds can compare to yours. All the nations you have made will come and worship before you, O Lord; they will bring glory to your Name. For you are great and do marvelous deeds; you alone are God. Teach me your way, O Lord, and I will walk in your truth; give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your Name.*

*“I will praise you, O Lord my God, with all my heart; I will glorify your Name forever. For great is your love toward me; you have delivered me from the depths of the grave. The arrogant are attacking me, O Lord; a band of ruthless men seeks my life—men without regard for you, but you, O Lord, are a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness. Turn to me and have mercy on me; grant your strength to your servant and save the son of Your maidservant. Give me a sign of your goodness, that my enemies may see it and be put to shame, for you, O Lord, have helped me and comforted me.”*

Luke 11:9-10 says:

*“So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.*

*“For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.”*

Pat, that wonderful Christian woman, added after those verses: “May the hand of the Lord direct every footstep, Mark. Trust Him always! Only good can come to you. I will pray. Shalom! Peace.”

Did Roger and Pat say, “Oh, poor Mark. Come cry on my shoulder, you poor boy”?

No.

Do you recall one time when Jesus, confronted with a leper, or an invalid or demon-possessed person, said: “Oh, poor lamentable you. I feel so sorry for you”?

No. Jesus said things like: “Get up. Take your bed and walk.” He did not console them. He healed them. He drove out the demons. Whatever was necessary, but never, never did He feel sorry for them outwardly. His approach was a positive one.

For people who have lost their jobs, His “take your bed and walk” command might just as well be “take the Lord’s instructions and carry them out.”

Please don’t sit there, shrug, feel sorry for yourself and wither away—as easy as that might seem. The devil would **love** that. and who wants to make that snake happy, anyway?

“Cast your burden on the Lord and He will sustain you; He will never let the righteous fall,” Psalm 55:22 tells us.

Our faith—that is, the Source of our faith—can do for us what He did for the woman who had been bleeding for 12 years and came up behind Jesus and touched His cloak. Matthew 9:21 says:

*“She said to herself, ‘If I only touch his cloak, I will be healed.’*

*“Jesus turned and saw her. ‘Take heart, daughter,’ he said, ‘your faith has healed you.’ And the woman was healed from that moment.”*

.....

Family and friends have come to the rescue of many others besides me. A friend, Peter, is a prime example, from an experience he had.

When bad fortune and trickery took his alarm and security business on Cape Cod from him, he “lost absolutely everything,” he says. “In fact, we did not qualify for unemployment for me.

“I swallowed my pride to get food stamps, but it had to be done. I didn’t know which way to turn. I had no place to go. Even my attorney had worked covertly with the man who bought my business.”

Was he bitter? Yes, at the man who deceived him and got his business, at his lawyer, at his bank for the unsavory deed, at a relative whose blunder had cost Peter the business, at a friend who had come into the company and who ended up taking over for the new owner.

But did bitterness do any good? Leviticus 19:18 says:

*“Do not seek revenge or bear any grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself...”*

Again, if you let bad feelings fester then you have no room for good feelings. Everything must be positive. Peter found that out.

But first he dealt with his bitterness, his loss, the terrible pain and shame he felt... And he did so badly: He went home and went to bed—**for three days**.

Just before his downfall, Peter had drifted away from the church. “I had quit teaching Sunday school and was going to church maybe once every four or five weeks, then stopped going altogether,” he says. “I was not asking God for any help whatsoever.”

But eventually he had to get out of bed and do something. “The creditors were knocking at my door along with the IRS.”

A friend let Peter and his family stay at the man’s condominium free while the complex was being built. There were no jobs available and Peter had a non-competitive agreement with the man who had bought his business, so he couldn’t work in the alarm industry, or even on the police department. He drove taxi.

Then along came Pat, his former secretary. Just like Roger and my Pat, did she feel sorry for him?

Again, no. In fact, “she told me it was **my own fault** that I was in the fix I was in because I had quit the church and Sunday school,” Peter recalled. “But I brushed her off as a ‘religious fanatic.’ I said, ‘Yeah, sure,’ and walked away.”

But Pat wouldn’t let Peter off that easily.

A couple of weeks later, they ran into each other again and the conversation went something like this:

Pat: “Did you do as I said?”

Peter: “Let’s be sensible about this...”

Pat: “That’s just what I **am** being is sensible, but you’re not. If you prayed on this you would see that things would happen, things would change.”

Peter says that not long after that encounter, Pat “cornered” him in the supermarket and made him pray with her “in front of 50 million people.”

Pat told Peter he had to do something for God right then. Peter had just a few dollars to his name, but Pat said, “You’re right at your lowest point right now, aren’t you?”

There was no denying that.

“Right at the point of your greatest need, right?”

No denying that, either.

“Then this is the time you’ve got to give something, every last bit of it. Whatever you’ve got, you’ve got to give it to God.”

So Peter decided to give to the Christian Children’s Fund. “We prayed on it again and I agreed that I had nothing to lose,” he says.

From that moment on, things began to pick up for Peter and his family. He went to job counseling, where “everything is positive, nothing is negative,” and his life and happiness turned completely around.

“There was a total attitude change after the prayer,” Peter says. “I had classified Pat as a fanatic. I had gone to church but had let my beliefs dissipate.

“I think God was telling me, ‘You’re so blind that I am not going to guide you until you open your eyes to see what is around you.’ I didn’t feel guided at all...

“It was only after the prayer, only after acknowledging that God is God and He is there and that I had to do something to show my sincerity—all right, then He opened the doors.”

Peter says that after the prayer, he felt better but didn’t expect anything. Yet, “you really have to expect from God, and I hadn’t expected. Then when things started to happen, everything started to happen good.

“I said, ‘Boy, He’s been trying to get my attention all this time and I didn’t even realize it.’ It changed everything for me.”

It surely did change Peter’s life. He became a minister and started serving God.

His advice to people caught in the situation of losing their jobs or business is: “Believe in God. And you’ve got to trust; if you do believe He’s there and you do pray to Him, He’s going to listen and He’s going to respond to you. And you’ve got to do something to prove you believe in Him. You’ve got to do something for someone else. You’ve got to do some Christian act. You have to do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”

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That is sound biblical advice for anyone caught in the quandary Peter was in, but how about the person who goes to church, who is a Christian and helps others, and all of a sudden he or she loses their job?

Those people must stand unflinchingly behind their conviction that God is with them, that things happen for a reason. Perhaps that person has gone as far as they can in the direction they have been heading and God wants them to change directions—both for their own betterment and for the betterment of God’s Kingdom.

Peter feels that sometimes people lose their jobs because God wants them to grow. “And how do you grow unless you are nurtured?” he asks. “It’s just like watering flowers; it can rain or not. It’s just like in business: You can get locked into something.”

Peter tells the story of when he worked at a bank when he was in college. Most of the bank’s employees worked there not because they enjoyed it – in fact, they hated it—but because they had been working there for years and it had kept them employed through the Depression, and therefore they were dedicated to it.

“They were withering and dying,” Peter says. “They were not allowing God to nurture them. They wouldn’t look any further than the chart they were working on at their desk and that was that.

“The bank was God to them and it was too bad.”

Being nurtured and continually growing are crucial to our Christian existence. Colossians 1:10-13 says:

*“And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”*

In this letter to the church at Colosse, Paul later decries people’s reliance on human wisdom and tradition. It isn’t man’s wisdom, but God’s, that we should be seeking and that will give us all our answers. Grow in His Word and we will grow in His knowledge and wisdom.

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Bob Wells, whom I met years ago when he was reaching out to others through Bob’s Helping Hand in San Diego, reacted the opposite of Peter when Bob lost his job in 1982.

“On May 18 my boss called me at 2:30 in the afternoon and asked me if I would consider taking an offer of early retirement. He said my decision would be irrevocable and he had to have an answer by 7:30 in the morning,” Bob told me.

His wife, Marlane, another strong Christian, said, “If that is what you are impressed to do, take it.”

Bob asked counsel, prayed and slept on it. The next morning he accepted the offer, packed up his belongings from his office and retired ... at the ripe young age of 50!

Bob said, “My peers asked me why I was retiring so early. I told them, ‘I don’t know what the future holds but I know Who holds my future.’”

“It was time to end that period of my life,” he said.

After that time, many wonderful things happened to Bob and Marlene, including a trip to China with the Norma Lam Crusade, attending Berean Bible College as full-time students, and Bob working for nine months as director of the Singles of Faith Chapel.

“We are excited about what God has in store for us next,” Bob said.

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We can look at losing a job in two ways—the end or the beginning. Isn’t it best—for us, our families, our friends, and our psyches—to look at it as a new beginning, a time of challenge and a time to accomplish a new dream?

“Often I look and see a person is probably going to end up with a better job. They may go through a couple of years of trauma. But they will be better off in the end,” said a Christian friend of mine, Ted Horton.

Ted left Pebble Beach Co. in 2001, after several years as vice president of resource management, to form his own agronomic consulting firm in Canyon Lake, California, near San Diego. Ted is one who looked on the positive side of the situation when he was fired as general manager of the prestigious Westchester Country Club in New York in the early 1990s.

Just before he left Pebble Beach, he told me, “I wake up in the morning, look out the window of our house at Monterey Bay and think to myself, ‘Wow! Is this really true?’ I have

the greatest job in the world.” It stayed that way until he and his wife decided to move closer to their children and their families.

Ted is—and has reason to be—optimistic for friends who lose their jobs.

Being pessimistic and cynical can be our very undoing when a job is lost. We can be like the man who smelled the flowers and wondered where the funeral was, or we can be like the man who smelled those same flowers and stood in wonderment at what incredible things God had waiting for man whom He created.

Pessimism. Cynicism. Fear. They shouldn’t be in our vocabulary. Neither should stagnation, because we can’t reach our potential if we stagnate.

I could think of my lost job and cry over not getting that weekly paycheck. Or I could praise the Lord for giving me a push through that morass of procrastination I had built up and reach upward to my potential.

After all, it is best to remember that God may not pay weekly ... but He pays in the end. (An old Dutch proverb tells us that and I believe it.)



*“We act as though comfort and luxury were the chief requirements of life, when all that we need to make us really happy is something to be enthusiastic about.”*

-- Charles Kingsley

## Chapter Four

### Go for It with Daring-do

An arrow can only pierce its target if the marksman releases his fingers from the bowstring. In the same way, we can only reach our potential if we let go our trip on apprehension and fear.

John Adams once said, “In esse I am nothing; in posse I am everything.”

Potential. Willpower. Drive. Perseverance. Self-control. They are all vital ingredients to success. Books have been written about each and all of them.

I would add a couple more traits for success. One of them is daring. It was once said that all glory comes from “daring to begin.” Do you dare do something you’ve never done before, go somewhere you usually would not dare to go, push for a goal that most people would dare not seek?

Daring. It is the stuff of swashbucklers—and God-seekers. It is the stuff of astronauts journeying into an unknown darkness beyond our own Earth—and of people who are leaving one job and stepping forward into another which might seem frightening, like a long dark tunnel filled with bogeymen. It is the stuff that puts its possessor on another level above and beyond who they would be without that characteristic.

Recall the original disciples. How caring, how strong-willed, how loving—how **daring** they all were, some of them from the very moment they met Jesus.

Matthew tells us that Jesus, as He walked along the shore of the Sea of Galilee, saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and Andrew—fishermen. They were casting a net into the lake.

Jesus said, “Come, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.” At once, they left their nets and followed Him.

Those men Jesus called into His service left everything—their families, their familiar surroundings, their jobs, all the strings that together formed their lives. Think on that for a moment. They left everything they had worked and lived for.

They dared. They dared to follow a Man they didn’t know,<sup>1</sup> into a future they could not fathom. Their lives became filled with challenges, hurts, failures, successes. They went on an extraordinary voyage that few of their time would have taken—that is, few would have followed that Man Jesus because they knew not what the future would hold in store. But if they hadn’t had daring, the Word would not have been spread to the world of their time—to Philippi, Galatia, Ephesus, et cetera.

We can look back on that time and wish that we could have had the chance to be among Jesus’ disciples. Wouldn’t you give your right arm to have been one of His disciples, and live with Him and follow His lead, knowing that whatever He led you to do would be exciting and the **right** thing for you? What an incredible adventure! What a fulfilling life to have lived with the Son of Man.

If you feel that way, don’t despair. You still can follow Jesus, be one of His disciples, even 2,000 years later. You can make those moves in your life that He wants you to make, stepping forward in faith, making changes in trust, looking toward the future with hope.

You can do it all if you only **dare** to take that first step—just like Peter, Andrew, James and John. This is your perfect chance to get into the Word. Dig into it. Spend a lot of time in it. Live it and breath it. Step forward in faith and daring.

The scriptures are loaded with examples of people whose lives were highlighted by their faith in God. Abraham, even though he was past the age to produce children, was enabled to become the father of descendants “as numerous as the stars in the sky”<sup>2</sup> with a barren wife, because God considered him faithful.

By faith Abraham offered his son Isaac as a sacrifice when God tested him, figuring that God could raise the dead to life.

By faith Joseph, when he was about to die, spoke about the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt.

By faith Moses refused to be known as the son of the Pharaoh’s daughter and chose to be mistreated along with God’s people rather than live in riches. Moses, by faith, led the Israelites out of Egypt and kept the Passover and sprinkling of blood so that the destroyer of the firstborn would not touch the firstborn of the Israelites.

By faith the Israelites passed through the Red Sea, which God parted for them but then drowned the Egyptians.

By faith Joshua saw the walls of Jericho fall after leading his people on a march around the city. By faith Noah built the ark, Daniel survived the lions’ den, young David killed Goliath, Samson routed armies of the Israelites’ enemies.

We are told in I Peter 1 that we “though faith are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.”

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Many of us when we reach our mid-30’s and 40’s are hit by what is called a mid-life crisis. To some of us it is debilitating, psychologically if not physically.

The ghosts of decisions not made, moves not taken, and of possibilities passed by haunt us. Would things be better if I had done this or taken that chance? we wonder.

We can't relive the past, and dwelling on it can be very harmful—if not traumatic.

But sometimes we can use that past to our advantage as well. List those roads you didn't take and challenges you walked away from; then decide which, if any, still appeal and would bring fun back into your work week; then pray to God about it. Then, if you and God agree, go for it!

If you don't get His confirmation, wait. Wait and read the Word and pray, send out those resumes. Read. Pray, Open whatever job doors you find, asking God to close those He doesn't want you in. Eventually He will open the door to the place He wants you—if you are with Him.

That mid-life crisis can be transformed into mid-life victory—a resurrection of the youthful exuberance you once possessed and a rebirth of all those old possibilities.

It's a second chance at fulfillment.

Just like He forgives our sins and gives us second chances and third chances and 70-times-seven chances, God also gives us second chances in our careers. He wants us to be successful and happy whether we're 18, 35, 50 or 150. When we seek His guidance He doesn't care how old we are. And all we have to do is be in the spirit, not in the flesh—and **dare**.

....

It is so easy—too easy—to get caught up in the feel-sorry-for-me syndrome. “Oh, poor misbegotten soul me I'm in such bad shape and the world owes me more than this truly it does can't anyone give this child a break?”

Do that and you will go right down the tubes.

Don't even **voice** the thought.

As it says in Psalm 116:10: “I believed; therefore I said, ‘I am greatly afflicted.’”

What did I do when I was fired the first time after I was saved? I praised the Lord. Calls came in and I made some. A friend at work put me on a prayer chain she belonged to. A Christian brother put me on another prayer chain. A Christian sister put me on yet another. The word spread like wildfire in the Christian world in my area. I was astonished. I have no idea at all how some people found out I had lost my job. Three days after I was fired, my wife and I were praying together with Roger and Sally Landry, uplifting the Lord, asking His direction, confirming that the best thing in our lives was just ahead.

Helping one another is crucially important to us Christians. We have faced persecution for 2,000 years, battle with it now, and can be sure of struggles with it in the time ahead. But we should do all we can to strengthen each other, just as the Christian community did in the days of the first disciples. Luke tells us in Acts 2:44-47:

*“All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.”*

You don't have to sell your belongings to help the needy or your out-of-work friends, but just praying with and for them helps their psyches immeasurably. Believe me—it certainly helped me and my family.

(Meanwhile, while I was being blessed by Christian friends, I used the firing to minister to others. It was a personal testimonial: Everyone I spoke with I told not to worry, that I'd be

just fine. This had happened for a reason. The Lord had something in store for me. I was going forward in faith in the Lord, I told them. I had a smile on my face that would have lit up the state of Maine, I could feel the love of Christ within me; my face felt flushed with the Spirit.)

It is critical to seek Godly counsel while dispelling that “sorry” syndrome. When two or more people gather together in His Name He listens. Use your Bible study group or other fellowship—whoever is filled with the Holy Spirit. If you have none of these, find a minister or Christian counselor who is filled with the Spirit; bear in mind that any aren’t. Why is it so important? Because if you are, you have the **power** of the Spirit to call upon; if you aren’t, you don’t. It’s that simple.

As my minister friend, Peter, says: “We are only human, and our strength and wisdom are only human, so we must turn to the Lord for help.”

Peter says many of us, especially our young people, are anxious, worried, about what may happen in the months and years ahead. “They’re concerned about the uncertainty of their days. Whether it’s the threat of the HIV virus, a terrorist attack, a nuclear bomb, or a poisoned aspirin capsule, the certainty of carefree life does not carry an unlimited warrant on this earth,” he says.

And although no one is wise enough to predict the future, we do not need to know the character of our tomorrows, Peter points out. “All we need to know is that God is with us and is adequate for all our needs. Whatever the future may hold, He can supply us in all our wants, in all our requirements, and see us safely through.

“But we **must** trust His power, His wisdom and His grace, unconditionally. If we let in the slightest hesitation, the most minute doubt, then it becomes like the well-planned surprise party that fails because someone let the word leak out. It’s like baking a cake with a cup of sour milk; it spoils the whole flavor of the cake.”

The message is this: no matter what, we are not always sufficient to handle our own problems. But God is.

But Peter adds: “God does not pamper His children. He does not appeal to our softness, but to our strength. He does not weaken us by doing everything for us. God strengthens us with might by His Spirit within us, so that we can straighten up under the load.”

....

Faith is an all-important commodity.

Your faith must be strong and it must be the right kind. There is a world of difference between praying that something will happen and having faith that it will.

In the Book of Mark we are told that a man took his son, who was possessed by an evil spirit, to the disciples for help. They failed to drive out the demon, so the man went to Jesus. Jesus told the father, “Everything is possible for him who believes.”<sup>3</sup>

Can you imagine what an incredible promise that is? All things are possible to them that believe. No limit is placed on God’s ability—or His willingness—to answer our prayers ... **except** our own lack of faith.

The father in the story in mark believed that Jesus was Lord and could do miracles, but that is not faith. Even the demons believe God’s power but continue to do their evil. James says: “You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder.”<sup>4</sup>

In the same way, you can believe in God but not show enough faith to get your prayers answered. As I told a Full Gospel Business Men’s Fellowship International crowd one day, if

Full Gospel members had business cards they would read: “We believe in miracles. God provides them.”

Pat Robertson, founder of the Christian Broadcasting Network and CBN University in Virginia Beach, Virginia, once said: “You do what God tells you to do and you look for His opportunities to make what He tells you to happen, happen. And the only thing that will stop it from happening is for you to have negative thoughts and to say to yourself, ‘It can’t happen, it won’t happen,’ or (that) God is unjust or unfair to ask this of me, or He hasn’t given me enough money, or I’ll just sit down and wait for the money to come.”

“Set your goals according to the will of the Lord,” Pat says. “Set them so they glorify God. Set them in prayer and do what God tells you.

“When He calls you and that vision comes of what He wants you to do, don’t complain to Him that you don’t have all the resources of the Rockefellers, Chase Bank, CityBank or \$20 million to begin with. Take what you’ve got, use what you have and it will continue to grow.”

How will you gain success? Pat says: “Use what you have. Reach out in faith. Use more. Work more. Take what’s there. And move to the next level. Then God will give you success in whatever goals you’ve set that will be beyond your wildest dreams.”

Asked about faith, my son Darek when he was 13 alluded to the Israelites when they were walking through the desert following Moses. They followed the Lord, Who was in a pillar of cloud during the day and a pillar of fire at night They knew God was with them because of the presence of that cloud and fire. **We must know** that He is with us, too, in order to have the strong faith necessary to make our lives good lives, to fulfill what He has planned for us.

If you don’t have that sure knowledge, get in the Word and seek it. I can’t emphasize that enough.

♦♦♦♦

Ray and Sally Martin are special people and they have a special faith.

They have built their faith on the rock of Christ, and a few years ago they needed that kind of strength. Ray left his job as manager of a department store in Lewiston, Maine, and the family moved to the Midwest, where their daughter had enrolled in college. It did not work out and they later returned—only to go back out there. They learned a lesson through this experience.

“I’m still going through tough times today,” Ray said at one point. “And it’s not because of God. And it’s not because of the devil, either. It’s because Ray Martin chooses. God has given me free will. It’s my choice to choose—good and evil—and sometimes we make mistakes.” Ray and Salley—all of us—sometimes make the wrong choice.

But, despite those hard times, Ray said, “If our hearts are with God we can expect miracles.”

He added one more statement I’d like you to think on: “Whatever you read has to go down to your heart—that’s where it becomes life.”

Those lines, verses and precepts in the Bible become life in your heart.

You can operate on sense knowledge. But if you operate on sense knowledge—that’s your own—you may be in for trouble. It’s God Who knows all—not you and I. He knows what is around the corner for all of us. So it’s His knowledge we should seek, not man’s His sometimes doesn’t make sense to us at the moment. but it does in the end.

His plan may, on the face of it, look like the back of a crocheted picture—all dangling and messy. But when you turn the picture around and see the front, it's beautiful, a work of art.

Yes, as Ray said, god has given us free will. And, boy, can we mess up exercising it!

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My San Diego acquaintance, Bob, says, "Jesus said, 'All you've got to do is trust and obey and I will show you the way.'" "

"He calls me," Bob said, "because He has a special thumbprint that only I have—things that only I can do."

A special thumbprint. I like that view of our lives. It is so true. God has blessed each one of us with our own special talents. Too often we do nothing with those gifts. Many times it's simply easier to not take the challenge those gifts present. Isn't it easier for the great sprinter to not spring, to not put in all those hours practicing day after day?

Isn't it easier for the talented cook to just steam hot dogs than "create" a scrumptious meal?

Isn't it easier for someone blessed with the creativity to be an artist to instead critique art rather than paint themselves?

Do you get the idea?

That also relates to giving up on yourself or your talent. History is laden with people who succeeded but only after years and years of struggle in anonymity.

Robert Frost and Thomas Edison, Orville and Wilbur Wright. What would have happened if they had given up? If God gave us a talent we should use it. Not doing so is a slap in His face. It's showing the Creator of all things—Who loved us enough to give His only Son for us—the back of our hand!

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Jesus doesn't get behind you and push you to do something. He gets in front of you and leads you to do it. The psalmist wrote of the Lord: "Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path."<sup>5</sup>

No obstacle is too great. No dream too far removed from reality—if it conforms to God's plans.

If you've been fired you might ask, "What should I have been doing when I stayed instead of leaving my job?"

If you have not lost your job but feel you should leave, you might ask, "Shall I dare? I know my job well and the paycheck comes in steadily and pays the bills."

Unfortunately, that security is what we look at when, instead, we should look heavenward. "Where is our security of trust?" asks Peter. "Is it in the paycheck we get, in the company we work for, is our security and trust where it should be: in God Who is going to take care of us even after we are gone from this earth?"

"We work at a company until retirement; but then the security of trust ends. The Social Security picks up until we die. But who picks up from then on when we go on to the new life?"

God is the answer. God is always there for us in this life and He will be there when this life is done—if we trust Him.

If we don't trust Him we take our chances.

In Peter's case, when he joined the ministry he also worked for a nationwide electronics firm. He kept pushing back the date when he would completely leave that firm because he didn't quite trust God enough even then.

"Then He made things harder for me, to get my attention. God knew I wanted to serve Him, but I just wasn't ready to let go. The **worldly** things were really holding me," he said. "Yet, He knows when there is somebody who is willing to do things and He wants that person; then He is going to get that person no matter what."

God has been picking people for His tasks since the beginning. Moses, Abraham, Joshua, Samson, the disciples and Paul, Luther, Wesley, Knox... Do you think He has stopped now, or that He has stopped before getting to you and me? No.

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Accept what has happened to you. Asking why doesn't get you anywhere. Look forward, not back. If you must, look at it like Linda Ellerbee, a longtime major television network reporter. She said she doesn't trust people in the news business who haven't been fired.

"I've been fired twice," she said. "I'm **very** trustworthy."

(That made me feel better, especially when the third time came around.)

Rush Limbaugh has been fired more than a half dozen times. Salley Jesse Rafael literally dozens of times. Giving up and wondering "why" will help only to correct a flaw if you find it. If you find it, correct it if you can.

My friend Jim Gilligan, a Christian who is a golf course superintendent in New Jersey, says people who are fired should resolve to set their own house in order.

"I've been trying to correct the things I was doing in my 'previous life,' " said Jim, who several years ago was fired after 22 years at his former golf course. "My current job is stronger because I've learned from those experiences. That's true when you're able to make the change. Some people can't do it. I've talked to a lot of superintendents who have been fired and did not evaluate themselves."

Books on career changes and outplacement don't address self-evaluation, Jim said. "They point you toward the future, stress your accomplishments, and put the negatives and failures aside. but the failures are still there."

Spot personal weaknesses, accept your portion of the blame for losing your job, and work to improve, Jim recommends.

Otherwise, why look back at all? Why lament the loss of a job when something better lies ahead? Because it is the unknown, does that make it the unfulfilling? No, of course not.

Yes, do learn from your experiences and mistakes but do not dwell on them. Defeats of the past are just that—in the past. And it is the same for victories of the past. What does a man gain from glory? The glory of the moment is sweet. Winning the World Series is sweet, wonderful success. You are heroes, the toast of the town, the idolized figures in the victory parade. But that is momentary. What of the future? How many people have you heard who said there had to be more to life than the success they had earned?

That "more" is the wonderful sense of fullness when you know the Lord.

The Lord stands ready to open doors for you. Just as important, He is there to close them as well.

Pat Robertson relates the time when Paul, accompanied by Silas and Timothy, passed through the Phrygian and Galatian region, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the Word in Asia. Acts 16:7 tells us they tried to then go into Bithynia, but again "the spirit of Jesus did not permit them."

“I’m sure there were people in Asia and Bithynia who said, ‘Paul, tell us about Jesus,’ but Paul was used to hearing God’s still, small voice. And the Holy Spirit said, ‘Don’t you stop, Paul. Keep going,’ “ Pat said. “Unlike Paul, you may not always be sensitive enough to God’s voice to know when He is saying yes and when He is saying no. In such instances, the Lord may use closed doors to guide you.”

Don’t be surprised if the Holy Spirit slams some doors in your face. In fact, pray for Him to do just that in cases about which you are not sure. He certainly slammed a few pretty hard in my face; I got a scrunched nose from one of them, I think.

And, like me, when you come to the end of the corridor, with all the slammed doors behind you, you might have to wait. In fact, God did tell me a plan he has for me. But He also told me, and it was confirmed by others in the Word, that I had to get closer to Him, dig in the Word, wallow in it, soak it up like a sponge. The Lord said, “Be still and know that I am God.”<sup>6</sup>

Being still requires faith that God knows who you are, and what His plan for you is—in **His** time.

He knows about every feather that falls from a bird’s head; surely He is keeping track of His people here on Earth.

Do you know the vignette “Footprints”?

It reads:

*One night a man had a dream. He dreamed he was walking along the beach with the Lord. Across the sky flashed scenes from his life. For each scene, he noticed two sets of footprints in the sand: one belonging to him and the other to the Lord.*

*When the last scene of his life flashed before him, he looked back at the footprints in the sand. he noticed that many times along the path of his life there was only one set of footprints. He also noticed that it happened at the very lowest and saddest times in his life.*

*This really bothered him and he questioned the Lord about it. “Lord, you said once I decided to follow You, You’d walk with me all the way. But I have noticed that during the most troublesome times in my life, there is only one set of footprints. I don’t understand why when I needed you most You would leave me.”*

*The Lord replied: “My son, my precious child, I love you and I would never leave you. During your times of trial and suffering, when you see only one set of footprints, it was then that I carried you.”*

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God is truly there to carry us over those rough spots of turmoil in our lives.

David’s Psalm 23 got him through terrible times, and it can do the same for us, for the Lord is our Shepherd, He restores our souls and guides us in paths of righteousness, and even in the valley of the shadow of evil, we need not fear any evil for He **is** with us.



*“Once you decide you’re going to settle for second, that’s what happens to you in life, I find.”*

-- John F. Kennedy

## **Chapter Five**

### **Shake the Dust from Your Feet**

This chapter could have been called “Get Out While the Gettin’s Good,” with the subhead “There Are Other Worlds To Conquer.”

Have you had any goals in the past that you have abandoned—through procrastination (a real killer), just plain laziness, lack of faith in yourself or in the project—or even lack of faith in the Lord?

Have you thought, “Boy, would I have like to do that!” but then added, “But it’s too late” ... “I’m too old for a new endeavor” ... “I can’t lose my pension” ... “Too many smart young kids out there have more spunk than this old body and I couldn’t keep up with them”?

Why do you feel that way when you can look at history books overflowing with people who accomplished great feats at all ages—some of them in several fields, not just one or even two.

Michelangelo, Winston Churchill, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson...

Are you accomplishing all you want to or all you hoped for? If not, then what on earth is holding you back?

Solomon tells us in Proverbs 29:25:

*“Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord is kept safe.”*

And using words he felt so strong about that he repeated in Proverbs 6:10-11 and Proverbs 24:33-34, Solomon warns: “A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest—and poverty will come on you like a bandit, and scarcity like an armed man.”

Pray about those goals of old. Perhaps they are the direction God wants you to take now.

It’s easy to be afraid and it’s easier to be lazy. But wouldn’t it be great to give that old dream a shot?

One lesson I learned is, do not make the Lord keep prodding you. Listen! Do what He tells you!

But you're secure in your job, you say? The paycheck comes in each week, you say? You can respond to the Lord next year, or the year after, you say?

Well, you may be right. The job may be secure. It feeds the family. But is it the right place to fulfill the divine goal God has set for you? God bless you if it is.

When Jesus sent off His disciples to spread the Word to all corners of civilization he told them to take nothing with them, only the clothes they wore.

Was Paul ever fat and with job security? No. He had been but left all that—dropped enormous power, position and security, as well as power, to preach the Word of God. He worked wherever he went to earn his keep.

No, worldly security was not a priority of the men and women who knew Jesus, and He did not teach them to make sure bread was on the table.

To the extent you respond to His urgings now, you are the architect of your own destiny. If you sit still you may let that destiny pass you by.

Don't let the question of bread on the table be the foundation or cornerstone for your decision. Don't reject the true foundation. That is Jesus.

Jesus told the parable of the wise and foolish builders:

*“Therefore, everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against the house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. The rain came down the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.”*

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Jesus may be prodding you just as he did my friends Peter and Bob and me—and countless others.

Bob said: “My life has changed. After 43 years of going my own way I found that I needed help from my Creator. When I was in a hopeless state of affairs He helped me, He gave me hope and He gave me a new life.”

Bob added: “No matter who you are or what you have done, Jesus wants to help you, too. However, He has given you free will to accept or reject Him. By turning your life over to Jesus, you, too, may receive His promises.”

“Through hope you have vision and through vision you get breakthroughs,” Bob told me when I lost my job a second time.

And Peter counsels that people should discover the wonders of God's miraculous power and look in His direction for wisdom and grace.

As he said, “The biggest and best advice is to believe in God.”

And Dick Morin, a FGBMFI member from New Hampshire, once declared: “There's victory in Jesus. Jesus can meet any need in your life. Not only that, He wants to... He can and He is willing!”

“Ours is a world,” said noted 19th-century American writer Don Marquis, “where people don't know what they want and are willing to go through hell to get it.”

We as Christians can overcome that shortcoming. We **can** know what we want and go through **God** to get it.

Thinking back on when he had just a few dollars in his pocket and a Christian television station was a faraway dream, Pat Robertson said: “We trusted God to find a job... God was good and provided us through all this time.”

And he added: “We have never lost our joy. It is the joy that the Lord is our strength. Satan can steal your goods ... but he can never ever steal your joy.”

Jesus said: “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.” (Matthew 11:18-20)



*“Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate.”*

-- Mark 10:9

## **Chapter Six**

### **God in Action**

We’ve seen God in action, my family. That’s exactly how our younger son Darek said it.

The year after I got fired that second time, when I had been a Christian for two years, we took in \$5,000 more as a partially employed person than I had earned the previous years as a fully employed newspaper editor. And I had far fewer headaches and struggles; my mental well-being improved markedly.

Two short-term public-relations jobs came my way, one for an auto-parts chain and another for a Catholic school. Our life-insurance company went public and bought our stock for \$2,500. My former employer had an unexplainable change of heart and decided to pay me for two weeks’ vacation pay he owed me. Then he added a third week for which I was to become eligible that year.

And the timing was perfect for when the Internal Revenue Service tax-return check arrived in the mail. that was another \$1,000.

And Loy took a short-term part-time job that brought in needed cash.

Finally , I stopped searching for a job and dispatched angels to find a job for me, if one existed. Four days later I received a call from a publisher saying he was starting a trade newspaper for the golf industry and would I be its editor.

That job, as editor of *Golf Course News* and *Golf Course News - International*, and my subsequent firing after 11 years, led to the greatest blessing. I had overseen *Golf Course News* as it surged to the second-ranked trade publication in the golf industry. But, during the last five of those years I had struggled with God about leaving. I wanted to begin my own

public relations firm. It was an urging, a prodding I wrestled with because of, what? That paycheck. That security. Doubts about success.

Mine was a story of no-guts-no-glory.

That is when the ax fell and there I was facing unemployment—and the most glorious opportunity of all: my dream of my own company.

Loy and I went before God and prayed to Him: “God, if this is truly of You, then we will make no calls looking for clients. They will have to come to us.”

That very first morning after my firing, the telephone rang at 8:30 a.m. And it has continued to ring. I now work out of my own home, saving a 50-minute commute. I get to spend a lot more time with my best friend, my wife, who works alongside me, putting her marketing degree to use as my marketing consultant. We pretty much decide the work schedule. Our income has more than doubled. God, not man, is our boss. And what a great Boss He is!

The one thing He asked of me: Give Him 10 percent of my work time. His first assignment: write a devotional. Count that done, with other exciting assignments to follow.

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Meanwhile, God has moved in other, miraculous ways.

Loy, Darek and I all have had healings as well, mine from a burned hand and a badly cut finger and Loy’s from a skin condition—in which God made our injured parts new like a baby’s.

But my favorite healing to recount is Darek’s. Since birth Darek had been afflicted with color-blindness (pass down by both grandfathers), never knowing the true beauty of the world around him. One day he saw his mother crying as she looked out the window at the kaleidoscopic autumn colors. When he asked, she said she was crying because he would never see how beautiful the world was around him. He went into his room and asked God to be able to see colors so his mom wouldn’t be so sad (not for himself even). When he awoke the next morning—*voila!* He could see the colors of the most beautiful sunrise!

We’ve all seen these things and know God has His hand in our destiny, yet everything may have unraveled had it not been for Loy. This is her story:

“Your first reaction when your husband loses his job is fear, and because you don’t like to be scared or get angry.

“My first reaction was that, and I struck out at Mark because I felt, why couldn’t he just do what everyone at the newspaper expected him to do and he’d still have his job?

“That reaction lasted 10 to 15 minutes, then I got angry at the newspaper and everything in society—like you’re a tiny ant and everyone’s out to squish you: an anti-establishment feeling.

“Right after that—in a few minutes—I started praying for Mark, me, the whole situation—because I didn’t like the feelings I was having and I knew God wouldn’t help me if I had those feelings.

“As soon as that initial burst of anger is over, ask forgiveness for that anger and pray. Through prayer, things will be worked out.

“Another thing that is helpful is to read a lot of the Psalms because they touch upon a lot of the feelings you’re experiencing—particularly anger. They help you work through anger.

“Usually if God has allowed you to be unemployed there’s something you should gain out of it. Turn it to that advantage. Pray for getting something positive out of the experience.

“We’ve learned that we knew we were supposed to depend on God and in this time we **had** to.

“When we needed money it came in—through another day’s work (part-time) at another newspaper) or an unexpected check in the mail.

“When we needed encouragement we go a dividend check, a call to do public-relations work, an interview...

“If the situation isn’t resolved speedily you can’t expect to be on a constant peaceful level with God. And you can’t expect the anger to be completely gone. When you feel it there you have to take it to God each time so it doesn’t get a foothold. It’s like refreshing yourself at the well. It gives you peace and courage. You’re refreshing, renewing yourself with the living waters of Christ.”

....

Handling the job loss with the children can be especially demanding and difficult. We learned some tips here as well.

Loy says: “Help the children deal with it. Encourage family and individual prayer. You have to let the children express their feelings, then have them see their situation from their father’s viewpoint.

“Get them involved in things they can do to help: not complaining, trying to find ways to save money, looking in the paper for a job.

“Whatever the worse they think can happen, assure them you will do whatever you can to prevent that from happening.

“Do your best to not be afraid in front of the children. I always believe that the Lord has His hand on the situation and you should let your husband, and children, know how you feel.

“When you **do** blow up at your husband and children—**and you will**—always in the calm after the storm tell them you’re sorry, that you did let frustration interfere but that’s not how you truly feel.

“Covering up makes it worse, especially with children; they can sense something’s wrong and will make it out to be worse than it really is.”

....

Loy says the wife “can be a sounding board to some extent, but **she is also** going through tough times, so it’s not always easy to be that sounding board. That’s why she should encourage her husband’s friend or pastor to talk to him.”

Loy adds that before the husband loses the job and the wife notices his attitude about his work is bad she should encourage him to “get in gear” and change his job before he gets fired.

People should try to be fine-tuned to their spouses’ feelings—whether they are anxious, nervous, out-of-sorts in any way.

To her credit, Loy did just that. To my discredit, I didn’t act; I procrastinated.

And if the husband is depressed, “it doesn’t help to look on the bad side of things,” Loy says. “You have to get him to focus on praying on things. If he can’t, you have to be optimistic.

“Also, if you have a minister or close friend, get your husband and that person together to talk because the husband needs other outlets and support besides yourself.

“Don’t encourage talk against your husband’s old boss, or talk with ex-coworkers to do the same. That just festers the hurt and blows it all out of proportion, or won’t allow you to drop it. I think God wants you to forget about it.”

In the meantime, she says, the wife should also find someone she can talk with besides her husband. “She is going to need support and her own sounding board.”

How about the in-laws on both sides? “Don’t let parents interfere. Understand that they will have fears—they might not have the same faith. But don’t let their fears cause insecurity in you.”

All my Christian friends who lost their jobs credited strong Christian wives with helping them pull through the experience. I was blessed with Loy. In fact, I don’t recall her blowing up as she said she did.

Peter had Marge. “I thought losing absolutely everything would be the crusher,” Peter says. “But Marge has a fiery fighting spirit. She had to prove that she didn’t make a mistake (in marrying me).”

But what if a person loses his or her job and their spouse says, “I put my faith in you and you let me down”?)

The problem is where the faith was placed in the first place. That has to be set straight before even the very first step toward reconciliation can be taken. You don’t put your faith in other persons. You put it in God.

God comes first. God comes before husband or wife.

“It’s a matter of convincing her,” Peter says. “If you can’t, I feel sorry for both of you.”

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And what if you’re the friend instead of the husband or wife?

“Do not say everything’s going to be all right and dismiss their feelings,” Loy says. “Let them express it and be angry; they need to be angry. But don’t **you** be the negative person. Let them say their boss is a so-and-so, et cetera.”

And after they’ve expressed these feelings and let it all out, “encourage them in prayer, help them find a job, help with their resumes, look on the positive side of the situation. Perhaps the job was pulling them away from God; they can use extra time to do some of the things they hadn’t done before.”

Very important, Loy says, is to “always keep in touch with them. Don’t be close, then drop them and put them on their own. Keep in touch with them.”

And if you are speaking to the spouse of the person who has lost their job, Loy urges: “Let them know they can’t be everything. They can’t look on themselves as the glue that holds everything together. Let them know they, as well as their spouse, are going through fear and anxiety.”



*“Men are God’s methods. While men look for better methods, God looks for better men.”*

■ E.M. Bounds

## Chapter Seven

### Shalom: Fullness of Life

Being jobless can be a long haul or a short one. It can be a hard time or an easy one. It can be a trying time. It can be an exhilarating one.

It can and does weaken many people to whom it happens. But it can’t weaken you or me, can it—**if** we remain strong in the Lord. Satan certainly would be thrilled if it did, if being jobless turned us away from God.

Use the time of unemployment wisely. Look for a job, but also spend more time with God, read His Word, absorb it and live it. Share it. **Grow** with it.

And Paul advises us to be patient—something God had a real struggle with in me. I used to have trouble waiting for the traffic light to turn green. I had to either get a handle on that dreaded impatience or go quietly insane.

James wrote in James 1:2-6:

*“Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind.”*

And James added in James 5:7-8:

*“Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord’s coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the*

*autumn and spring rains. You, too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near.*"

God said: "Be still and know that I am God." I would draw back to this sentence often when impatience got me to chewing my fingernails or squirming in the driver's seat on the hour-long commute to my part-time employment. "Be still and know that I am God." He is in command, and He is calling the punches—give or take opportunities here and there that our free will has accepted or denied. (That free will gets us into more trouble than we can ever imagine.)

While that free will has caused problems, my salvation has been faith, and plenty of it. Without faith in the Lord, without knowing that He has special plans for me, I am sure I would have sulked my way through the rest of the month—or longer—when I was fired that second time.

Instead, I went on a long spiritual high, praising God for His bounty, for all He had done. And it keeps on getting better between Him and me; He keeps pouring out His blessings and especially His gifts.

Never before had I been able to call on His "gifts of the spirit" as I have lately. These gifts are important, as Jesus said in Mark 16:17-18:

*"And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people and they will get well."*

Paul says in I Corinthians 14:1: "Follow the way of love and eagerly desire spiritual gifts..." He goes on to say that prophesy is especially important; while speaking in tongues connects you with God, prophesy edifies the entire church. "He who prophesies is greater than one who speaks in tongues, unless he [who speaks in tongues] interprets, so that the church may be edified."

All the gifts are important and we should ask God for them. The offer is there, it's standing and waiting for us to accept it.

Ask for the gift of tongues because it is crucial, allowing your spirit to pray. Then ask for interpretation. Ask God for evidence of His presence by healings; believe them and claim them. I can testify that the phrase "Ask and you will receive" is totally true.

And that is true in material and spiritual matters.

I believe I have more courage now than ever before. The unknown that before frightened me does not scare me any more. That courage, too, has come in mountains—from God. And though I have far, far to go, I have seen great strides in my spiritual life—from the blessings of new Christian friends to a closer oneness with the Lord.

Even if we have terribly messed up our lives and have made mistake after mistake and are light-years from the perfect Christ, it is not too late; our lives can be reshaped.

Recall that the Lord told Jeremiah to go to the potter's house and He would give Jeremiah a message. Jeremiah wrote in Jer. 18:3-6:

*"So I went down to the potter's house, and I saw him working at the wheel. But the pot he was shaping from the clay was marred in his hands; so the potter formed it into another pot, shaping it as seemed best to him.*

*"Then the word of the Lord came to me: 'O house of Israel, can I not do with you as this potter does?' declares the Lord. 'Like clay in the hand of the potter, so are you in My hand...'"*

God can do it. He can change us, reshape us, and reform our destiny—if we sincerely ask Him.

Jesus died so that we might have shalom—fullness of life, heaped up, squeezed together, overflowing. he doesn't want us to be frustrated by life. That doesn't fulfill His promise to us as our savior. And He promises plenty!

Paul told the Philippians that because they supported Christ's ministry "my God will meet all your needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus." 1

Ecclesiastes 2:26 says: "To the man who pleases Him, God gives wisdom, knowledge and happiness, but to the sinner he gives the task of gathering and storing up wealth to hand it over to the one who pleases God..." 2

In Deuteronomy 28:1-14 Moses relates a covenant God made with mankind. It is an incredible promise that God has made to us under our covenant relationship; that is, **if** we do something He will likewise give us something. now God could have said, "Keep My commandment or you will go to hell," and that would have been a stiff enough sentence to ensure that many people would do His will. But our God is a loving and giving God Who wants us to have abundance. So He promises to give us over and above our needs **if** we obey Him.

As Moses wrote:

*"If you fully obey the Lord your God and carefully follow all his commands I give you today, the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations on earth. All these blessings will come upon you and accompany you if you obey the Lord your God:*

*"You will be blessed in the city and blessed in the country. The fruit of your womb will be blessed, and the crops of your land and the young of your livestock—the calves of your herds and the lambs of your flocks.*

*"Your basket and your kneading trough will be blessed. You will be blessed when you come in and blessed when you go out.*

*"The Lord will grant that the enemies who rise up against you will be defeated before you. They will come at you from one direction but flee from you in seven.*

*"The Lord will send a blessing on your barns and on everything you put your hand to. The Lord your God will bless you in the land he is giving you.*

*"The Lord will establish you as his holy people, as he promised you on oath, if you keep the commands of the Lord your God and walk in His ways. Then all the peoples on earth will see that you are called by the name of the Lord, and they will fear you. The Lord will grant you abundant prosperity—in the fruit of your womb, the young of your livestock and the crops of your ground—in the land he swore to your forefathers to give you.*

*"The Lord will open the heavens, the storehouse of his bounty, to send rain on your land in season and to bless all the work of your hands. You will lend to many nations but will borrow from none. The Lord will make you the head, not the tail. If you pay attention to the commands of the Lord your God that I give you this day and carefully follow them, you will always be at the top, never the bottom. Do not turn aside from any of the commands I give you today, to the right or to the left, following other gods and serving them."*

All those promises hold as true for us today as for the people of Israel after they left Egypt. And just as surely as the obedient will be given blessings, so will the disobedient receive cursings so sorrowful that I don't care to list them here. (Read on from Deuteronomy 28:15 for an explicit list—and be thankful that isn't you.)

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While God is working on, and with you, keep your family close to Him too. And you yourself, draw on your family's strength but also be their strength; show them the power of your convictions and beliefs, and the power of God.

Dr. Edwin Louis Cole wrote: "When a man obeys God he maximizes his manhood. God maximizes a man's personality, talent and character." <sup>3</sup>

Crucial to a man, Cole said, is that he has been designated the priest of his house.

"Whether you believe it, receive it, live it, or ignore it—you're the pries. It's the job of the pries to minister not only to the Lord, but also to the ones entrusted to his care. That means a man must minister to his wife and children," Cole said, adding that men are given directions in the Bible on how to be priests of their families. <sup>4</sup>

Things happen in our lives and we want to blame the devil. Don't blame the devil for everything. Surely Satan comes to steal, destroy and kill, to rob us of our personality and character. But if Jesus is your Savior and the Lord is your God, you know the devil was defeated 2,000 years ago. If you read the last chapter in The Book you know you've won... We all have, us sons and daughters of God

Saint Paul's writings contain many piercing and powerful lessons for us. In Romans 8:8-11 he tells the church:

*"Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God. You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of Righteousness.*

*"And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you."*

Later, Paul adds in Romans 8:28-39:

*"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified those he justified, he also glorified.*

*"What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life-- is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written:*

*'For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.'*

*"No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angles nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

And Saint Matthew tells us in 7:7-12 that Jesus said:

*“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.*

*“Which of you if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for fish, will give him a snake? If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in Heaven give good gifts to those who ask him! In everything do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.”*

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Whatever you do, do not look back. That is in the past. Look toward the future. Those are the moments you can live to the fullest. Sunsets—and rainstorms—of the past are mere memories. Each moment that lies ahead is a potential treasure for you—if you let it be.

Wake up in the morning praising God, and put reading and meditating on His word first on your list of things to do. Then promise yourself you will absorb every beautiful thing you see that day, smell the flowers and herbs, taste the special flavors you have not ventured to try, view the panoramic beauty of that hill you normally trudge over, take time to do things you haven't yet done.

And, in your job, look for the good, stretch your imagination in how things can be done better and quicker. Test your initiative and imagination and creativity. Persevere. Give to others, for through giving you receive; remember that the first 10 percent of what you get should go to God, and He will surely bless you many times over. Strengthen your willpower. Use daring!

Above all, keep your eyes on Jesus—no prophet, evangelist, teacher, minister or “apostle”—but Jesus alone.

We will in a time, and Christians always have, of being persecuted or ridiculed for our beliefs. Overcome that. Gain strength through it.

We are the Lord's keepsakes, we Christians. We are His treasure. He knows the number of hairs on our heads, so doesn't He know every move we make, every thought we have—we, His most prized creations?

He created man so that man might praise Him. Is He therefore going to let us Christians go to our downfall? Believe in Him have faith in Him, trust Him, **listen** to Him. Ask what He wants you to do, not what do you want yourself to do.

He has given you and me, all of us, free will. Let's not, any of us, let Him down. When we do, we let ourselves down as well. But when we do what He desires, we uplift ourselves, we uplift our Creator, and we uplift all mankind and His creation.



*“After Job had prayed for his friends, the Lord made him prosperous again and gave him twice as much as he had before.”*

-- Job 42:10

## Chapter Eight

### The Search

The person who is righteous (in right standing with God) and who is humble and acknowledges the supremacy of the Lord, will reap a reward from God. What is crucial to successfully finding the job God wants you in, is to release control of your life and your self to Him.

It seems like us human beings always want to be in control. We want to call the shots. We want to make every decision in our lives, from our social friends to our community and church activities, to the movies we watch and the books we read—to our jobs. **We** want to assume complete control. And that’s exactly why we so often flub up. We must relinquish control of ourselves to the Lord if we are to claim that great prize He has in store for us.

If we find ourselves, having lost our jobs, going helter-skelter, thither and yon like a confused duckling looking for its other, we know that is not from God. Once you notice that, get on your knees—or your face—and seek the Lord. Our God is an orderly God. He does not have any chaos in His realm. So, if you find that you have lost your center of gravity, make the Lord that center—make everything you do revolve around Him and you will maintain an even keel in your life.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics’ monthly survey found that the average weeks of unemployment ranged from 14.6 weeks in January to 16.6 weeks in May. That represents three to four months, or more, searching for a new job.

As you step out in your search, your flesh may want to get discouraged, desperate, frustrated, and you may feel your self-esteem plummet.

Robbie Ftorek was fired from New Jersey, Jim O’Brien from the University of Dayton, and Bill Belichick from Cleveland. Do their names sound familiar? They are three men who, in 2002, had all coached their teams in the playoffs of the National Hockey League, National

Basketball Association and National Football League, respectively. And they are all in Boston.

“I was thinking about that the other day,” mused Boston Celtics then-General Manager Chris Wallace near the end of the NBA’s 2001-02 season. “You see what Belichick [winning the Super Bowl] has accomplished, in light of getting fired in Cleveland ... maybe this is the Year of the Formerly Fired.”

As an author of a fictional book I couldn’t get published, I grew used to rejection. But I had to harden myself to it. That helped, I think, when the job rejections came after my firings. It also helped to know that one job is offered and accepted for every 1,470 resumes sent out.

If you’ve not experienced this, take heart from God’s promise that He will not let more than we can handle befall us.

Rejection can bring a person to his or her knees. or that person can put Satan on his knees by knowing their worth to God and taking authority in the name of Jesus over that feeling of rejection.

Dr. James Dobson found in a number of questionnaires he passed out to women’s organizations around the country that the number-one problem that plagued women was low self-esteem. Satan uses low self-esteem to pull us down and make us feel we are too small to play handball against a curb. We, the saved, have the promise of life everlasting; Satan doesn’t, and he hates us, he wants to bring us down, he wants to destroy us.

Jesus said, “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.” (John 10:10)

You know where the feeling of low self-esteem comes from, and you know you don’t want that snake wrecking your life. So grasp hold of the power of Christ living within you and kick Satan out. Kick him out of your thoughts any time you have doubts, worries or fears. God is not a God of doubts. He is not a God of worry. and He has nothing to do with fear.

Without getting into an entirely different teaching on our authority as God’s children, know that Jesus’ name is “the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth...” (Philippians 2:9-10)

In the name of Jesus, rebuke those feelings from out of your life. Then you can get on with finding that job the Lord has set aside for you.

Remember, first, that the Lord is your Provider and Adviser.

Remember, second, that optimism should be the prevailing emotion; discouragement will get you nowhere. You are not alone and, in fact, you may go this way again. Jobs in the United States last an average of 3.6 years. The average person job-hunts an average eight times in their career.

Richard Nelson Bolles, in his wonderful book “*What Color Is Your Parachute?*,” advises that you should not be a Job Beggar but rather a Resource Person.

As a Resource Person you will add an important ingredient to a firm in need of your assets. So assess your skills, what you have done, what you know how to do and the skill level at which you have done those tasks.

Then write these down, and be prepared to list them during a job interview: I have edited a daily newspaper; I have controlled a staff of a dozen reporters; I meet deadlines without fail; I lay out an attractive page; I organize committees; I published a newsletter; I wrote a novel; I coordinated a fund drive; I have preached in churches and have spoken to dozens of groups and classrooms of students; et cetera, et cetera until the job interviewers are so dazzled they put on their sunglasses.



Look over your list of skills and ask yourself if you want to continue to work at jobs that use those specific skills, or if you want to get into another type of work altogether. (I have two friends who left newspaper work to study law and both were in their 30s.)

If you decide to continue in a job using the skills you already possess, list the various businesses, industries or fields open to you. In my case I could work for newspapers, magazines, public relations firms or publishers, or I could be the public relations director for a college, hospital, power company or other firm, or I could be a freelance writer and work at my own schedule for a variety of publications. I took part of my time, for instance, and taught a course in journalism in an adult community education program; it was a lot of fun and it paid.

If you decide to change careers, find out if you will have to return for schooling or retraining in that field. I'll talk later about the retraining boom in the United States.

Here, let's proceed as though you have decided to continue in the line of work in which you have been. Your task is to find the best match between you the potential employee and potential employer.

Pinpoint where in the country, or the world, you want to live and work. Do that and you've gone two steps toward a new job: deciding what you want to do and where you want to do it. What remains is how to find that job and then getting hired.

Full steam ahead.

Make finding a job your job. That means committing several hours a day five days a week to the search.

When you track down a place you think you would like to work at, find out whatever you can about it. Ask anyone you know who works there all about it, from the benefits to work conditions to the bosses. Make sure it is not another bad situation and that you should be avoiding it rather than knocking the door down to get in.

If you do knock on that door, do it personally whenever possible so that you can speak face to face to the person doing the hiring. You can make a lasting impression on a person face to face that you could never accomplish by a letter or phone call. I'll talk later about personal interviews and resumes as well.

If you have not been fired but want another job and are thinking of quitting, remember this: It is easier to find a job when you are employed. Once you are fired—for whatever reason—would-be employers see it as a negative. They often don't look beyond the fact that you were fired, they just automatically erase you from their list of finalists.

I could tell a managing editor that I was city editor for nine years before being fired, that I was often cited for a job well done both by management and in the community, that the firing obviously was not because I couldn't do the job. But that managing editor would, and in one case did, respond: "C'mon, there had to be a better reason than what you've told me." He just did not believe me—and why should he?

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Once you get out there on that job-hunting circuit the more avenues you pursue the better your chances of finding the best match.

Here are some avenues you can use:

- placing your name and credentials on the various Internet job placement sites;
- mailing out your resume to both businesses and recruiters;
- answering help-wanted ads in newspapers;
- placing ads of your own;

-- contacting executive search firms and private employment or placement agencies, college placement firms and the federal-state employment agencies;

-- using personal contacts with friends, business associates and former teachers or professors. My former journalism professor, the late Brooks Hamilton at the University of Maine-Orono, was a wonderful help to me, and his presence offered more support than he ever knew.

If you work in a field in which your product can be visually presented you might consider a portfolio displaying that work. For instance, a set designer could present photographs and sketches of their stage designs in an exciting way; I've seen it done.

Resumes can also be important, although not as influential as you might think. According to Bolles, resumes are not very effective as extended calling cards and can be best used after the interview as a memory-jogger.

Of course, oftentimes you'll never get the interview without an invitation and that invitation many times depends on the company receiving a resume from you. In that case, you want it to be attractive and informative. Most print shops will typeset and print copies of resumes for you. Resumes look good on heavy, colored stock. They can be long, detailed resumes or short ones. (I have one of each.) They can include information on your objectives, qualifications, experience, education, personal history, and a summary of your attributes. I have even seen a couple of resumes with "mug shots" of the people on them; if those people couldn't contact me in person, at least I could connect their name with a face.

Some organizations print booklets full of resumes and send them to businesses around the country. For these Executive Manpower Directories you have to whittle your resume down to just a few words; and when you do, make them sparkle so they will stand out to potential employers.

### **Newspaper Ads**

Studies have discovered that many employers do not hire any employees through want ads in a typical year. This indicates just how many jobs are out there to be had and are not being advertised in newspapers—a startling figure.

When you do respond to a newspaper ad, tailor your cover letter and resume to highlight your experience that fits their job. Never state your salary range unless asked, and then add "depending on the nature and scope of duties and responsibilities."

People have met with very little success placing their own ads.

In both cases—answering ads and placing them—keep in mind magazines published in the field in which you work. Journalists, for instance, read *Editor and Publisher* and *Columbia Journalism Review*. And various Christian magazines have classified sections listing job openings.

### **Private Employment Firms**

The Federal Commission reports that private employment agencies have a 5-percent success rate. The fee is normally a couple of weeks' salary but varies from state to state.

According to Bolles, "An agency, with its dependency on rapid turnover volume business, usually has no time to deal with **any** problems (like career transitions). A possible exception for you to investigate: a new, or suddenly expanding agency, which needs job-hunters badly if it is ever to get employers' business."

Meanwhile, don't forget the U.S. Employment Service offices, which have listings for blue- and white-collar jobs in your state.

### Other Contacts

Friends, relatives, business associates—virtually anyone you know—is a potential job contact. Write out a list of them and proceed to contact each one concerning job openings of which they are aware. If they can think of none now, something may come up; and if you haven't made that contact they may not even know you're looking for a position.

Your alma mater's placement service is another possibility. Many schools provide this service to graduates all their lives.

Registers and clearinghouse operations set up job exchanges, handling both job-hunter and employer listings and charging each.

Two-thirds of all new jobs are in companies with 20 or fewer employees. Check them out in a concerted effort, and before you head out the door, try this, courtesy of Richard Nelson Bolles: Make a list of surefire ways to **fail** at finding a job, and a second list beside it with corresponding ways to succeed. You know which list to follow. Be prepared to follow it awhile since the average job search takes six to 18 weeks, or one month for every \$10,000 of salary you're seeking.

### The Interview

Actually, before the interview you want to find out exactly who it is that will do the hiring and in most cases that is **not** the personnel department. Only 15 percent of all organizations have personnel departments, and those that do, exist to hire only entry-level positions; for other positions they only screen out applicants and send the survivors on to the person or committee that will actually do the hiring.

Through your contacts, find out who is interviewing applicants and ask if you can use your contacts' names as having recommended that you talk to that person.

Now it's I day (Interview Day) and you're aiming for V Day (Victory Day) before sundown. You've done all your praying, all your homework on the company you're interviewing with, and have polished your shoes and had your hair cut. In fact—breath deeply now—you're in the office of and sitting in front of the person hiring for the job.

The personal interview, experts say, is more important now than ever. So now, one last time, you ask the Lord and thank the Holy Spirit for being in command of your tongue—that little muscle that can blow the ball game if it's not under control.

Remember, you're a resource you're selling this firm, a resource well worth the investment.

Scott Passeser, president of Career Planning Consultants in Jericho, N.Y., told *Newsday* in November 1987: "You've got to explain what you think you can do for your prospective employer. It's the same principle as any sales proposal. You have to know your product—you—and how it can benefit them. When you can do that, it turns the tide of the interview."

The background you have dug up—through contacts and other sources like annual reports and news stories—can be very important in this interview.

Marilyn Kennedy, career-planning consultant in Wilmette, Ill., says that while you may not be able to second-guess your interviewer "a person you meet on the outside may give you inside information." And, she added in a *Newsday* interview: That inside information can help you formulate answers to questions like "Why do you want to work for this company?" and "Why should we hire you?"

Robert Half, chairman of Robert Half International, a multinational, Manhattan-based financial-services recruiting firm, told that same *Newsday* reporter, Ronald E. Roel: If you're

questioned about things you don't know much about, admit it and then "shift the conversation to something you do know. You want to leave the interviewer with what you know, not what you don't know."

Asking questions helps you control the direction of the interview and distinguishes your analytical abilities.

During your interview, ask the interviewer to describe a typical day at your job, when your predecessor was promoted and what personal characteristics are necessary to do the job well. Do not "hold forth" all by yourself for longer than a couple of minutes at any one time, Bolles suggests, talking half the time and listening half the time.

Never, ever ask these four questions over the telephone or on the first interview:

- Does the organization believe in and support continuing education?
- What is the salary range the organization is considering for this position?
- What is the cost of living and housing in the situation where I would be employed?

(Ask this only if relocating.)

- What benefits does the organization provide?

This is a list of negative factors evaluated during the employment interview which frequently lead to rejection of the applicant, as reported by 153 companies surveyed by Frank S. Endicott while director of placement at Northwestern University in Evanston, Ill.:

1. Overemphasis on money; interested only in best dollar offer.
2. Unwillingness to go where we send him; won't relocate.
3. Poor personal appearance.
4. Overbearing; overaggressive; conceited "superiority complex"; "know-it-all."
5. Inability to express himself clearly; poor voice, diction, grammar.
6. Lack of planning for career; no purpose or goals.
7. Lack of interest and enthusiasm; passive, indifferent.
8. Lack of confidence and poise; nervousness; ill at ease.
9. Failure to participate in activities.
10. Poor scholastic record; just got by.
11. Unwilling to start at the bottom; expects too much too soon.
12. Makes excuses; evasiveness; hedges on unfavorable factors in record.
13. Lack of tact.
14. Lack of maturity.
15. Lack of courtesy, ill-mannered.
16. Condemnation of past employers.
17. Lack of social understanding.
18. Marked dislike for school work.
19. Lack of vitality.
20. Fails to look interviewer in the eye.
21. Limp, fishy handshake.
22. Indecision.
23. Loafs during vacation.
24. Unhappy married life.
25. Friction with parents.
26. Sloppy application.
27. Merely shopping around.
28. Wants job only for short time.
29. Little sense of humor.

30. Lack of knowledge or field specialization.
31. Parents make decision for him.
32. No interest in company or industry.
33. Emphasis on whom he knows.
34. Cynical.
35. Low moral standards.
36. Lazy.
37. Intolerant; strong prejudices.
38. Narrow interests.
39. Spends much time in movies.
40. Poor handling of personal finances.
41. No interest in community activities.
42. Inability to take criticism.
43. Lack of appreciation of the value of experience.
44. Radical ideas.
45. Late to interview without good reason.
46. Never heard of the company.
47. Failure to express appreciation for interview's time.
48. Asks no questions about the job.
49. High-pressure type.
50. Indefinite response to questions.

If the employer asks for a resume, tell them you don't have one with you but you would be happy to mail them one. Before you go to bed that night, send out that resume along with a hand-written note expressing your gratitude for the interview and that you are looking forward to working with them. A job applicant's enthusiasm is often a deciding factor.

If you and the employer had a wonderful interview but they cannot hire you right away, you might offer to do volunteer work for a few days so that they can see firsthand your level of work.

Keep close to your heart throughout this entire process, that if you are right with the Lord, He has His hand upon your life. Low self-esteem and depression are not from God. Accept closed doors as being just that—closed—and nothing more. It was God's will that those doors were closed. The right door—the one He will open wide for you—lies ahead, in His perfect will and time.



*“I am the Lord your God, who  
teaches you what is best for you, who  
directs you in the way you should go.”*  
-- Isaiah 48:17b

## **Chapter Nine**

### **Retrain the Brain**

Retraining. It may have been in the dictionary but it was rare if ever used until the 1980s. It may have been in the dictionary but it was rarely if ever used until the 1980s. Now educators and business and government officials can't get away from it. From Baltimore, Maryland, to Muncie, Indiana, from Fairfax, Virginia, to Presque Isle, Maine, leaders of technical and junior colleges are meeting with state education department officials, industry representatives, community officials—anyone and everyone who can help retrain America's workforce.

If you're thinking of a new career, this could be for you.

The post-World War II baby boomers are maturing; older workers are choosing early retirement; the growth of the workforce is slowing as the average age of workers increases and the distribution of workers shifts from younger to older.

According to a roundtable sponsored by the Keeping America Working Project and the Center for Occupational Research and Development, the major two impacts of these factors are “an increased importance on retraining and adjustment for adult workers” and a “greater demand for worker skills to keep abreast of individual job demands.”

Meanwhile, the U.S. Department of Labor said in its executive summary, *“Workforce 2000: Work and Workers for the 21st Century,”* that new jobs in service industries will demand much higher skill levels and that “as the average age of American workers climbs toward 40, the nation must insure that this workforce and its institutions do not lose their adaptability and willingness to learn.”

That report said that while our country's image of progress is manufacturing more cars and more computers, the service industry is growing far faster than any other segment of the economy. “These industries—health, education, trade, finance, insurance, real estate, and government—must be the targets of government efforts to improve productivity,” the report said.

Another report said most new jobs will be with small firms and entrepreneurs who are noted for looking “outside” for their education and training needs.

That waxes well for you if God has led you to being retrained for a new job. The report said the aging of the workforce will increase the importance of retraining and adjustment for adult workers. “Indeed, for at least the next two decades, employers will be forced to draw primarily from today’s pool of workers to fill pressing job vacancies.”

Indeed, everywhere you look people in schools, commerce, industry and labor are working together to fill new jobs that are emerging with new technologies.

In Maine, when the General Electric plant in Bangor expanded its workforce, the state Department of Education and Cultural Services devised a plan to design and operate an advanced tool training program to specifically serve the needs of the GE plant, and to design and operate a basic level/orientation training program to backfill entry-level jobs.

In Illinois, the state Board of Education’s Education for Employment Program said it “sets the framework for programs that can adapt quickly and smoothly to changes in the workplace and preparation of workers.”

The board said: “The rapid rate of technological change requires that workers frequently upgrade their skills to accommodate state-of-the-art technological innovations. Emerging occupational fields in the broad areas of automated systems manufacturing, electronics, telecommunications, energy, biotechnology, data processing, laser optics and pharmaceuticals all require special instruction for youth and adults... (School) program must be flexible to accommodate workers as they switch from obsolete jobs to new ones.”

Where industry and private citizens and others are not moving fast enough, they are being prodded.

If you are interested, I suggest contacting your state department of education to find out what is available to you.

If you are drawn to one job in particular, ask as many people as you can find who are doing that work: How did they get into this work? Why did they get into this work? What do they like most about it? What do they like least about it? How does someone train for it and what is entailed in that training?

Again, before you take any big step: Ask God.



*“A man is rich in proportion to the number of things which he can afford to let alone.”*

-- Henry David Thoreau

## Chapter Ten

### Paying the Tab

For decades—perhaps centuries, perhaps thousands of years—people have been saying, “Money is the root of all evil.” If those people thought they were quoting the Bible they were wrong. “For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil,” Paul wrote in I Timothy 6:10.

“The love of” money, Paul said, not money itself. In fact, let’s look at the entire passage from verse 9 to verse 10: “People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many grieves.”

Money itself is neither good nor evil. How we perceive it, pursue it and spend it—that is, what we want to keep a check on. Money is what we most often use to give God our firstfruits and to pay our bills, from the mortgage to the molasses. To the extent that we are dependent on others to supply our needs, money is necessary.

Ask yourself the following questions:

- What is the source of my attitude toward spending money: Parents? Friends? Television commercials and newspaper advertisements? Other people in the world? The bible?
- Am I in harmony with my spouse over the way our household finances are managed?
- Are my finances in such shambles, so loaded down with bills and debts (Ouch/ Shoot that credit care!) that I may be in conflict with God?
- Who controls our mind set when we make decisions about charity?

Again, Timothy received instruction from Paul when Paul told him that, as Christ’s soldier, not to let himself get tied up in worldly affairs, for then he could not satisfy the One Who enlisted him into His army.

God comes first, family second and your job third in the grand scheme of things.

One account in the Bible that ministered to me is found in II Corinthians and relates to hardships Paul and his companions had suffered in Asia: “We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life. Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on god, who

raises the dead. He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us..." (II Cor. 1:8-10)

Paul and Timothy had come to the end of their tether and then realized they had to trust in God, not themselves. That crucial trust in God came into play and God pulled them from the fires. Sometimes God has to allow us to get to the end of our tether to teach us that lesson. When there is no one else to rely on, when we have exhausted all other avenues, from the banks to the relatives to selling off the family jewelry, **then** we turn to the Lord. Take the advise of people who have been through this travail and go straight to God, trusting Him to be your Provider, your Source.

So much of this chapter could have "Do as I say, not as I do" typed between the lines that I am turning red at the keyboard. But please absorb it because I think it is critical.

When you lose your job, leave it, or whatever, hold a family meeting about the situation. It is important for you and your spouse to agree on what actions you will take; and it's also important for the children to know what is happening with your income situation, what to expect and what is expected of them.

Now that the priorities of your life—God, your family, your job—are clear, set your priorities for your money resources: giving, saving and living on the balance.

"... The world is mine, and all that is in it," God says in Psalm 50:12.

Paul wrote: "Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work." (II Cor. 9:6-8)

Paul is talking here about tithes and offerings. Traditionally, tithes are the first 10 percent, or firstfruits of what you earn and offerings are anything over and above that 10 percent that you give.

"This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God." (Luke 12:16-21)

Now, getting by with what remains of your money after giving your tithes and saving what if anything you can, begins with being good stewards of what God has given you. I still kick myself for not putting a couple of thousand dollars into stocks and getting a good ride on the bull market of the mid and late-1990s before the recession. I believe the Spirit was telling me to do that, yet I didn't. And now I feel like the servant in Luke 19 who kept his mina laid away in a piece of cloth and got no return on it.

Paul told the Corinthians that God is "not a God of confusion" (I Cor. 14:33) and "everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way."

That is bad news for those of us who God is still working in to put their lives in order; but it is still 100 percent true and it is something you should receive into your heart when you sit down with your spouse to decide when and where and on what you are going to spend your money.

Develop a record-keeping system that includes folders for all your costs. For instance, automobile payments and insurance, credit cards (which, if you have one at all, you should use only when you know you can pay it off the first month and therefore not pay any interest), the various Christian organizations and ministries you support, electric, oil, telephone and Internet bills, mortgage and various insurance bills.

Keep them in a filing cabinet, desk drawer or book shelf.

Get your savings and checking accounts in order, and put a budget in black and white, planning as best you can what your absolute necessary expenses will be and what you can expect to be coming in.

Order is crucial. I can't help but think here of GIGO, a term that comes to us thanks to the computer age. It means "garbage in, garbage out" and is an acronym noting the fact that garbled input to a computer results in garbled output.

Satan loves to see us in disarray. He loves the GIGO in our lives. I'm sure it gives him a big kick; and we can give him a big kick by getting it clear out of our lives.

So set your budget and live within its limits using discipline. Give your 10 percent and whatever added offering the Lord leads you to give.

Be frugal, using utilities only when you need to; turn off lights when you're not in the room, turn the thermostat down a couple of degrees and put on a sweater; turn down the air conditioner and wear a T-shirt; write people letters or e-mails rather than making long-distance telephone calls.

Put aside "X" dollars a month for your insurance policies that come due every quarter or half year.

Look at your doctor bills of past years and set money aside for that use. You may have the very pleasant blessing that, all of a sudden no one in your family gets sick or has accidents. We went from spending a substantial sum every month to the pharmacists and untold money to doctors, to never spending a dime for pharmaceuticals and seeing the doctor so rarely that his changing staff didn't know us.

Please do get some recreation. God is not a God of drudgery; He wants us to enjoy life and avoid the depression that Satan can try to afflict us with when we are sedentary and inactive in our social lives.

Consider canceling your newspaper and magazine subscriptions.

Of certain items of clothing are necessary, but them; if not, don't. Many cities have second-hand stores. Check them out. A friend of ours bought a beautiful L.L. Bean shirt for 50 cents at one of these stores and it will last her a lifetime, no doubt.

Instead of buying all your Christmas and birthday gifts, make them if you can. One of my all-time favorite gifts from my wife was a glass jar filled with "gifts" I could redeem, like "breakfast in bed," "one favorite dessert," and "one great big hug."

If you owe creditors money, go to them and say, "I can pay 'X' dollars a month, and I **will** pay that amount. Here is my budget. As you can see, I have other people to pay off and I can pay you all, but it will **have** to be this (X) amount at a time."

Having that budget will be evidence to those creditors that you have things in hand. You can also witness to them that it's really God Who has everything in hand, if the Spirit leads you.

Malcolm MacGregor, in his book, "*Your Money Matters*," said that in November 1975 the Federal Trade Commission ruled that retailers could pass on to cash customers the savings realized by them when the bank credit cards are not used. The retailer pays for 2-1/2 to 5 percent to the bank on every credit-card purchase. So you can say, "Since I'm paying cash, will you discount the 3 percent you would have to pay if I used a credit card?" Often, the merchant will agree."

There are myriad ways to cut back your household costs—if you don't mind some work. The Pilgrims, then the pioneers, got by with a lot less than you and I have today.

It's incredible what you can reap from a garden—food that will last you through the winter, from carrots and squash to beans and peas, from cucumbers in the form of pickles to

tomatoes in the form of spaghetti sauce ... and it will taste a lot better than store-bought as well.

Also keep an eye out for places where you can pick your own apples, to put away apple pies and applesauce; strawberries for jams and shortcakes; raspberries for cobblers and preserves; and corn to be husked and frozen for corn on the cob.

There is also a chain of agricultural stores in our area through whom you can order, at excellent prices, frozen foods. We usually order peas, corn, and a couple of mixes including one that has cauliflower, broccoli and lima beans.

In the springtime take an afternoon or two and enjoy the sun (at the same time spending some quality time with the Son) and go fiddleheading or dandelion digging. Young dandelions before they blossom and fiddleheads are delicacies—and they can cost you nothing but a little time.

The same is true of narcissus.

One new wrinkle in our lives that has really blessed us—both financially and in our taste buds—is raising some of our own food. We have raised turkeys, Cornish hens and sheep for our own tables (and blessed others with some as well); and we can confirm that you can't compare the taste of store-bought meat with that which you grow yourself. The natural taste of turkey is tenfold more delicious than the market-grown turkey.

We have experimented with muskovoy ducks, with success. And, as for laying hens, they provide eggs that taste far superior and are far fresher than those in the food markets that were laid days before delivery to the store.

Although we have only once bought meat through a good co-op, we know people who have good luck with them and use them all the time to buy a wide variety of foodstuffs. Check your area Cooperative Extension Service for a list of co-ops in your area. Co-ops can buy food cheaper because they buy in bulk; members usually put in time unloading the orders or distributing them.

Another food source for some people are independent, often Christian, food distributors. The Good Shepherd Food Bank, based in Auburn, Maine, distributes food all along the East Coast and it is sold for a minimal amount.

Now let's get right down to actually buying the food, a close relative to the kitchen where the stomachs of millions of men the world over have been won for thousands of years.

I can replay this scene from my life perhaps hundreds of times over, making changes in detail only to accommodate my hunger cravings of the moment:

It's eight o'clock in the evening and a long night looms ahead. Boy, am I hungry! I think I'll take a run down to the corner market and get some chips. Now I'm at the market standing in front of the potato-chip display. Josh, is it hard to choose between those Nacho chips and the Ripples; they both look so g-o-o-d... I think I'll buy both. Oh, and look at those chip dips in the rack: Yum-m, do I love onion dip. Absolutely, got to have the onion dip to go with the Ripple chips. Now I'm all set, and besides, they're closing up the store. "Hold it, Nick, I'm almost done," I call as I pass the freezer and notice the croissant pizzas. Hm-m-m, pizza sure would go well with the chips; it is a long night ahead, after all. Now, with all this food, I'd better buy some soda. Good, some diet cola for me (diet? after all that? Yuk!) and some ginger ale for Loy. Now I'm all set and at the counter to pay for the food... but "Wait just a minute, Nick. I think I'll get this candy bar here to hold me off until I get home."

Of course, you've never had an experience like that and gone out the door expecting to spend fifty cents only to spend ten dollars. Right?

This leads perfectly into the first in a list of suggestions on what or what not to do in shopping for food. That is, never go to the store hungry. It's noontime and you're in town to

shop and grab a bite of lunch; grab that bite first. Or, better still, make yourself a sandwich at home. It's cheaper if less fun.

Seymour Lieberman, head of Lieberman Research Inc., says, "Traditionally, women are more practical and conservative with money than men and their egos are less involved with it."

I think he's right; at least he's got the Mark Leslies pegged. There's a little bit of an ego rascal inside me that wants to buy the more expensive brand; probably to impress people who might sneak a peak into my shopping cart. That's just ego. If that's the case with you, rebuke it, cast it aside and stomp on it, all the while remembering that "Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall." (Proverbs 16:18)

Some more tips:

- The less you shop the less you will be tempted to buy things you don't need. Try once every two weeks or once a week, using a complete list and sticking with it. That list should be dictated by meals that you plan, so there should be no good reason to buy anything else.

- Stores are laid out to entice you into buying more items. Since statistics show that 72 percent of the time people shop for food they buy milk and other dairy items, stores place the dairy products so that you have to walk past aisles of goodies that would never make any nutritionist's list of "good-for-you" foods.

While these end-of-the-aisle displays lure you to them, remember that less than half of those items are on sale. Check out the generic-brand items before springing the extra cash for the "name" brands.

- If you and your spouse can keep a check on one another to prevent getting unneeded food, bring them along. If not, shop alone. Whatever you do, though, never ever, ever take along the children.

- Check the Sunday newspaper, *Readers Digest* and other publications you get for coupons. But before using them, be very sure to see if they really do give you a bargain. Oftentimes, items with coupons still cost more than some other brands.

- Give your hips and waist some good exercise while keeping your wallet fat by bending down to check the lower shelves. Many times the least-expensive items of their kind are kept on those hard-to-see shelves. Just think of those shelves as your 1-2-3 shelves,, check them out while doing a deep-knee bend or a waist bend and counting to yourself. And remember, a smile on your face all the while, thinking of the money you're saving while getting a little exercise.

- As much as you can, avoid prepared foods or convenience foods; you can pay for that convenience. Remember, the money you would be squandering is God's money.

- Be prepared to buy in quantity when you see a super-savings that is worth your while. Once we bought out a store's entire supply of a dog food (that happened to be our brand) that was on sale for almost half price. For every bag we bought we saved ourselves nearly that amount on a future purchase.

Once out of the supermarket, you still have to watch your step. Keep an eye—and your spirit—on watch for deceptions, people out for a buck, and your own lusts. In my case, I think I would reverse the order of those three. But for whatever reason, institute the delayed-action plan.

Under this play, you listen to the sales pitch and, repeat after me, say: "Thank you. We will talk it over and let you know in a day or so if we want it."

And when you're looking for a mixer or toaster, take an hour or so and discuss the purchase after checking over the various brands and their capabilities and warranties. It may

be that you need the four-slice toaster instead of the two-slicer, or that one mixer is easier to take apart than another.

Make that final decision away from the salesperson, away from all the pressure to buy. Be very sure you're not just buying on impulse. Pray! Compare prices at other stores. Ask someone you know who is an expert on the item you are considering buying.

Before setting your money down on that sales counter, make absolutely sure you really truly **need** the item. If not, don't buy it no matter how terrific the deal is. I still have shelving in the basement waiting for me to put it to use. I bought it at a wonderful cost, yet the money in my pocket must have been scorching me, screaming to get out ... because I didn't need that shelving. That was several years ago.

Beware of sale items, investigating to verify that it is a true sale price. Relatives nearby bought a floor lamp at a "sale price" from a national chain noted for its good deals. They went into another store and spotted the exact same floor lamp for \$50 less—and it wasn't on sale.

Beware, also, of "Featured Today" tags, which may not mean a thing, and "Special Purchase" tags, which may connote defective goods.

Oftentimes, if you go to a store late on a Saturday and the store has a sale beginning Monday, you can buy items at the sale price. If you happen in that store and there is a large supply of a certain item, it may well be about to go on sale. Ask an attendant.

How about buying used items instead of new? yard sales can be a godsend sometimes. Try a used car instead of a new one and save that 33-percent first-year depreciation you lost on new cars.

In Maine, we have a publication called "*Uncle Henry's*," a weekly magazine listing everything from automobiles to goats, from sleighs to freezers. Since individuals are selling them, you save the inflated prices stores must charge to pay middle men and overhead costs. Perhaps you have a similar publication where you live. It could have you a bundle.

*Consumer Reports* and *Changing Times*, available on newsstands, in libraries, everywhere, can save you time, trouble and future headaches with their lists of products' advantages and disadvantages. If you need a clock, for instance, can you read it in the dark and does it tick too loudly?

Finally (or is that firstly?), does God want you to have it?

Psalms 37:4 says: "Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart."

We have friends who walk in signs and wonders and are continually blessed by God's goodness and love. One couple whom we love dearly, John and Betty McWhinnie of Lewiston, Maine, needed a car but didn't have a lot of money to buy one. Their Father, God, loves them, too. So what did He do? He had someone buy them a beautiful station wagon, free and clear. John's biggest worry was how to deal with that car on his income taxes.

John and Betty earlier needed a computer for his consulting business. He found a wonderful buy, then someone visited them and wrote out a check for the entire amount.

The Landry's, Roger and Sally, needed to replace the shingles on the roof of their house. One day, lo and behold, a flatbed truck drove up to their house with a load of shingles, tar paper, flashing and nails—enough to replace the entire roof as well as a small addition they were to build. They do not know who provided that load. They **do** know who their Provider is.

You, I and every person who knows and loves Jesus should know that the Great Provider is the Lord, and He knows and loves and cares for us far more than we can ever imagine.

Always seek His face when you are buying. Before entering a store ask Him and thank Him, for speaking *ephatha* to you. Hear His wisdom and you can't go wrong.

The working wife is a phenomenon of the last 40 years. More couples than not feel they must both work to keep up with their debts. I won't argue this one way or another, but just ask that you look at both the pluses and minuses before putting a non-working spouse into the workforce.

The plus: an added salary.

The minuses: You have to subtract from that salary added taxes, tithe, transportation and maintenance of a car, lunches, extra clothes, hairdressing costs, employee expenses like union dues, health-insurance contributions and contributions to office collections, child-care casts, and forfeited savings (that is the difference in bought, convenience foods and meals made at home, sales not taken advantage of because the spouse is at work, inability to make clothes or grow a garden, make preserves or can vegetables and fruits).

Perhaps you could consider, instead, the spouse working for themselves, expanding on a hobby, making clothes, or whatever interests them and can be done at home.

In our case, Loy stayed at home and, with Jesus Christ as Lord of our lives and the Lord answering every one of our needs to the full, we did not need to be without one thing that we had when I was employed full-time. In fact, the two times I was fired after being saved, God provided **more** to our household financially than ever before. He more than equaled my salary once, and this last time doubled it!

He is a good God. Have faith that He will provide for you as well.





*“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old is gone, the new has come!”*

-- II Corinthians 5:17

## Chapter Eleven

### His Way Is the Only Way

I can't emphasize enough that the way to fulfillment can only be found through God, with your eyes firmly set on Jesus. And keep in mind that perhaps He hasn't chosen an easy road for you. He may have a difficult task prepared which will uproot you and your family and move you to another corner of the world. Throughout the Old Testament and the new Testament, God put people on the move, from Noah to Abraham to Moses to David to John the Baptist, to Jesus and all the disciples, and Silas and Paul and Barnabas, Aquila and Priscilla—the list goes on.

Please, keep your mind open to what the Lord wants from you—not necessarily what is safe and comfortable. And in order to keep **your** mind on **His** mind, you must be saved if you're not already.

I want you to take this time to seek repentance, even if it's a reaffirmation.

If you are not sure whether you are saved but would like that assurance, you can have it but you must meet God's conditions.

First, you must repent of your sins and turn to God.

Jesus said in Luke 13:3b: “Unless you repent, you too will all perish.”

Second, you must be born again; that is, you must from the heart believe and accept Jesus Christ into your heart and life, as your personal Savior. By doing so, you are saved, born again, and have a new life in Jesus.

When Jesus told Nicodemus: “No one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again,”<sup>1</sup> Nicodemus asked what He meant since “surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!” Jesus answered, “I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.”

And Peter tells Jewish and Gentile Christians scattered throughout much of Asia Minor: “For you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.”<sup>2</sup>

Third, confess your sins to Jesus and make a public confession.

Jesus is our mediator to God, intervening for us, as Paul told Timothy in I Timothy 2:5: “For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Jesus Christ, who gave himself as a ransom for all men...”

Matthew, who was with Jesus, quotes Him as saying, “Whoever acknowledges Me before men, I will also acknowledge before My Father in heaven.”<sup>3</sup>

Fourth, salvation is centered on these words of God: “But if we walk in the light, as he [God] is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.”<sup>4</sup>

II Corinthians 5:21 says: “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”

Jesus was the only entirely righteous one and at Calvary He took our sins upon himself and paid the price in the punishment we deserved. Because of the incredible exchange he made it possible for us to receive his righteousness and thereby be reconciled to God. What a fantastic gift—and would he give us such a gift if he didn’t want us to grab hold of it?

Colossians 1:13-14 tells us: “For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”

The scriptures are plenty and powerful that tell us we always fall short of the glory of God and that we should seek repentance. If asked earnestly, God will forgive me, he will forgive you, he will forgive anyone.

Now is the time to repent of those sins and to start life anew, becoming a new creation. Say these words aloud right where you are:

“Dear Lord God, I worship You and thank You that You knocked and that I answered; that You offered me new life and I accepted.

“I take You, God, to be my God.

“I take You, Jesus, to be my Savior.

“I take You, Holy Spirit, to be my Sanctifier.

“I take the Bible, as the Word of God, to be my Guidebook.

“I take Your people, God, to be my people—a holy fellowship to love and to share with, to comfort and be comforted by.

“I take my family and hold it up to you, Lord, to care for and bless.

“And I dedicate my body and soul to You, God, to live by Your laws and to do what You ask—deliberately, freely and forever.

“I repent of all my sins and fleshly desires, Lord, and ask that You forgive me.

“And let Satan tremble at this, God: I accept Your promise that as a child of the light I can do all things, and more, that Jesus did here on Earth. As He conquered temptation, so shall I. As He conquered fear, so shall I. As He dealt a death blow to death itself and lives with You, so shall I.

“Because of Your Spirit in me, I have victory over fear, self-doubt, the world, the devil and death.

“Thank You, God, for hearing my prayer, for giving me new birth, new life, new vigor—and new unmeasured worth in Your sight.

“Thank You, God, for starting to bring miraculous changes in my life. In faith I believe You will answer me, and I thank You for it! Praise be to the Lord!”

The Word tells us that we are accepted and redeemed (Ephesians 1:6-7), delivered and forgiven (Colossians 1:13-14), a part of the Body of Jesus Christ (II Timothy 2:3), called with a holy calling (II Timothy 1:9).

It says we are heirs to Abraham's promises (Galatians 3:29), conquerors (Romans 8:37), joint heirs with Jesus (Romans 8:17), justified (Titus 3:7), ministered to by angels (Hebrews 1:14), born-again incorruptible (I Peter 1:23), tabernacles of God (II Peter 1:13), kings and priests (Revelation 1:6), apostles and saints (Romans 1:5,7), and triumphant (II Corinthians 2:14).

Paul writes in Galatians 4:6: "Because you are sons, God sent his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, 'Abba, Father!' So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir."

Now, has God made us heirs of unemployment, or jobs that we hate, to be controlled by bosses who are hateful or unChristian? Has He made us heirs to poverty or low self-esteem?

Do you think it makes God happy to hear us lament, "Oh, God, I hate my job. My employer doesn't appreciate me! I'm not making enough money to put food on the table and pay the rent!"? He doesn't want to hear that any more than you or I would like to get a phone call from our children telling us that.

God wants His abundance for us. We are told in Proverbs 13:22 that "a sinner's wealth is stored up for the righteous," and in Ecclesiastes 2:26 that "To the man who pleases him, God gives wisdom, knowledge and happiness, but to the sinner he gives the task of gathering and storing up wealth to hand it over to the one who pleases God."

Jesus' first miracle was one of luxury. He was at a wedding at which they ran out of wine. When His mother asked, He turned water into fine wine.

Go forward in the faith and knowledge that God is with you, ready to help you every step of the way. With deep love and affection, He will carry you on His shoulders—and broad and powerful shoulders they are!

**-- END --**

## FOOTNOTES

### Chapter Two

- 1—Personnel Journal, Volume 64, March 1985, pp 38+.
- 2-- Personnel, Volume 61, Sept.Oct. 1984, pp. 70-75.
- 3—Personnel, IBID.

### Chapter Four

- 1—Except John was a first cousin to Jesus, his mother being Mary's aunt.
- 2—Hebrews 11:11-12
- 3—Mark 9:23
- 4—James 2:19
- 5—Psalm 119:105
- 6—Psalm 46:10

### Chapter Seven

- 1—Philippians 4:19.
- 2—Several passages strongly suggest that King Solomon wrote Ecclesiastes, but it may have been a later author.
- 3—*Maximized Manhood: A Guide to Family Survival*, published by Whitaker House, 1982. Page 40.
- 4—Ibid. Page 75.

### Chapter Eleven

- 1—John 3:3
- 2—I Peter 1:23
- 3—Matthew 10:32
- 4—I John 1:7

## APPENDIX

### Resources:

*The Holy Bible*—all of it, always.

*Career Guide to Professional Associations*, Garrett Park Press, Garrett Park, Md. 20766.

*The Christian's Secret to a Happy Life*, Ballantine Epiphany Inspirational Books, by Hannah Whitall Smith.

*Dun & Bradstreet's Million Dollar Directory*.

*Dun & Bradstreet's Middle Market Directory*.

*Financial Guidance*, Omega Publications, P.O. Box 4230, Medford, Ore. 97501, by Dr. James McKeever.

*Living More with Less*, Herald Press, Scottsdale, Pa., by Doris Janzen Longacre.

*Living on Less and Liking It More*, Moody Press, c/o MLM, Chicago, Ill. 60610, by Maxine Hancock.

*Standard & Poor's Register of Corporations, Directors and Executives*.

*Training and Development Organizations Directory*, Gale Research Co., Book Tower, Detroit, Mich. 48226.

*What Color Is Your Parachute?* by Richard Nelson Bolles.

*Who's Who in Finance and Industry*.

*Your Money Matters*, Bethany Fellowship Inc., Minneapolis, Minn. 55438, by Malcolm MacGregor with Stanley G. Baldwin.

*Financial Peace: Restoring Financial Hope to You and Your Family*, Viking Publishing, New York, N.Y., by Dave Ramsey.