

A pink slip could be the green light for God's plans

RANDALL MURPHREE

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"I earned my MGF degree fair and square," quips Mark Leslie. "Yep, I've mastered the art of getting fired – MGF." Leslie's multiple experiences with the proverbial pink slip occurred both before and after he became a follower of Christ. The "after Christ" firings prompted very different responses than the one before.

He has lost jobs as news director of a liberal arts college, as city editor of a daily newspaper and as editor of a golf trade publication. He finally put a stop to the pattern by starting his own business, The Leslies – Media Consultants, in Monmouth, Maine.

AFA Journal interviewed Leslie for some practical tips on how to handle the loss of a job. His book *Fired? Get Fired Up* can be downloaded at www.markalanleslie.com. Leslie's novels include the recently published *Midnight Rider for the Morning Star*, a gripping historical novel based on the life of American pioneer evangelist Francis Asbury (www.francisasburysociety.com.)

AFA Journal: How do we prepare ahead of time for losing a job – even when we know it will never happen to us?

Mark Leslie: The first thing in every question about life should be walking with God. I believe He will quicken your spirit to be alert to new possibilities and be ready for a firing, if indeed one is on its way.

Once I was fired after 10 years in my job and once after 11 years, and both times I felt that I was performing very well, thank you. Both times I was surprised, but in both cases I had resisted a continued urging from God to leave. So I should add to "Walk with God," "Listen to Him!"

Looking back, I see that I proved myself stubborn or cowardly, probably both. If I had acted on God's prompting, I would have closed the door calmly on those two jobs rather than have the doors slammed in my face.

Another thing you should regularly examine is if you're happy at your job. I remember one day going to work in the afternoon and our neighbor's little girl asked, "How come you're so happy when you go to work?"

"I love my job," I told her.

But after about seven years, circumstances changed, I got saved and saw things I didn't like. I lost that enthusiasm. When that happens, watch out. Something may very well be coming over the horizon.

That said, it is a good idea to update your résumé periodically, and keep an eye on newspapers' help-wanted sections and the many job Web sites like www.monster.com and www.ChristianJobs.com. If nothing else, that will keep you informed about the changing job market. And you might happen upon a position that really stirs your juices. (ChristianJobs recently merged with the well-known Interchristo ministry.)

AFAJ: What initial emotions should we expect if we're fired?

ML: Fear and anger, with unforgiveness and bitterness on their coattails. All are destructive and you must dispel them quickly.

Don't even voice any thoughts of despair or anxiety. Do so and you're headed down the tubes. As it says in Psalm 116:10: "I believed; therefore I said, 'I am greatly afflicted.'"

Sometimes we just have to be positive in spite of our circumstances. Be faith-filled and declare the great expectations you have in God your Provider. In the meantime, forgive, forgive, forgive, or it can tear you apart. Unforgiveness is the devil's playground.

AFAJ: What should we do in the first days of shock?

ML: Hold a family meeting about the situation. It's important for you and your spouse to agree on what actions you'll take. And it's also important for the children to know what is happening with your income situation, what to

anticipate 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.

AFAJ: What must we not do immediately after being fired?

ML: Do not act in haste. Don't run out and take that first job flipping burgers. This may be the pivotal point in your life, the single most important turn in the road you will ever face.

So you don't want to react the way the world reacts. React the way God would have you respond.

AFAJ: Then how do we move ahead?

ML: God says, "Where there is no vision, the people perish." (Proverbs 29:18, KJV)

I think He has a vision for each of us. Have you had any goals in the past that you've 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 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."

Man, history books are 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 to name a few.

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

A friend of mine just got fired. He has been a very competent writer and editor for probably 15 years or so, but his heart is missions. He took a couple of trips with his church to India to help after the big tsunami. He had just returned from a mission trip to South Africa when he was notified his job was cut.

What defined his life – that writing job, or his work for God? It didn't take him long to decide his future. It just so happened to coincide with his dream. I have to believe that after the jolt of being fired, the thrill of new possibilities hit him like a lightning bolt. He just informed me he's heading back to Cape Town for a year working with Living Hope ministries.

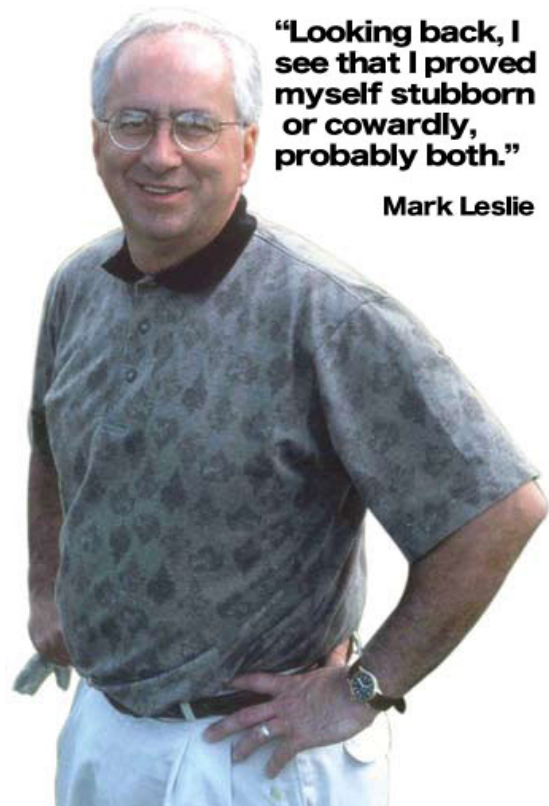
AFAJ: What are some Scriptural principles we should put into practice?

ML: First, know God hears your prayers. John tells us in 1 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."

Next, stand firm in your faith. In 1 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."

Finally, don't worry; expect God to provide. 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.” (Editor's note: These Scriptures quoted from NIV.)

AFAJ: What final advice do you have?

ML: Don't be your job. Too many people are just that. And don't be a prisoner of “security.”

Unfortunately, security is often what we look at when, instead, we should look heavenward. Where is your trust? Is it in the paycheck you get, in the company you work for? Or is it where it should be: in God Who is going to take care of you even after you are gone from this earth?

PINK SLIP POINTERS

After losing a job, be creative and aggressive in your search for employment. Along with Mark Leslie's advice, here are a few more ideas to spur you on:

Read publications – In addition to your local paper, check World magazine, Christianity Today, your denominational magazines and others that may list job opportunities. Read books on the subject. Leslie recommends *What Color is Your Parachute?* by Richard Nelson Bolles.

Request help – Ask friends, your pastor, business leaders, the chamber of commerce and local/regional job placement centers for leads and opportunities for training.

Research Web sites – Invest time on both Christian and secular sites, for example: Crown Financial Ministries (www.crown.org; 800-722-1976) has a “Search the Crown Article Library” feature. Choose the “Employment” option and find articles such as “Job Loss,” “Writing a Resume” and “Searching for a New Job” to help with your search for a job.

Finishers Project (www.finishers.org; 864-578-8622) connects seniors to opportunities to work in ministry, some paid and some volunteer.

Interchristo, longtime Christian job agency, has merged online with www.christianjobs.com to create the largest Christian employment site on the Internet.