

Job Loss: Who am I now?

From *A Time to Mourn, A Time to Dance*, the award-winning book from Thrivent Financial for Lutherans

Uncertainty, doubt, disbelief, confusion, shame, embarrassment, anger, fear, sometimes even relief. They are all feelings related to the loss of a job. Yet perhaps the deepest of all wounds is our loss of identity. Yes, we know we are *more* than our jobs. But because we invest so much of our time and lives into them, what we do for a living has a major impact on shaping our identity. There is a void that becomes difficult to fill.

Time can also be difficult to fill. It's hard to have extra time and no money to spend and nowhere to go. Then there is the waiting—tied to your phone or your computer, not wanting to miss a potential employer's call or email.

Unemployment can take its toll on a marriage. Spouses become cheerleaders. Often, the “balance of power” changes. The spouse has to carry more of the financial burden. Arguments can erupt over anything—especially money. Emotions run high. It's difficult to find things to talk about. Occasionally, violence or destructive

anger can erupt against an employer or family member out of a feeling of helplessness.

Coping with job loss requires us to redefine our goals and our self-worth. It challenges us to set timelines for what we want to do and when we expect it to be done. After all, if there's no job to go to every morning, why get up? What clothes should we put on? Where do we go to fill the time? What do we talk about at the end of the day?

Coping requires assuming tasks and completing them. Creating résumés. Searching the classifieds and job-search websites. Networking. Scheduling interviews. We need to take charge of these responsibilities. We need to set goals for every day and rewards for reaching them.

Redefining ourselves and finding ways to reclaim our power many times can be helped by calling on our trust in God and finding strength in our faith. It's also helpful to find others we can talk to who understand and will listen.

*Calamities hit saints
and prophets, too ... to test
and try their faith,
love and patience.*

— Martin Luther

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