

Question: My husband just lost his job of over 25 years. He is very discouraged. How can I help him? What would Jesus do?

Depending on the situation, a job loss can place a tremendous strain on an entire family. Often a job loss today means a loss of health insurance; thus, the health of an individual and his family may be placed in jeopardy. An individual may face a whole range of emotions from disappointment, anxiety, a sense of failure and depression to bitterness, resentment and anger. Some personalities seem better equipped than others to cope with the stress of unemployment and changes a job loss can bring. In past economically stressful times, some people have turned to crime while others gave up and took their own lives.

However, I do believe that Jesus Christ has some good news in such dark times for those willing to place their faith in him and his teachings. I am not suggesting that a Christian will not lose his job or that he will immediately find another. But a life of faith can help us cope with stressful times.

Consider the following suggestions based on the teachings of the Bible. A person experiencing a job loss needs expressions of unconditional love. Your husband needs to know that he has family and friends who will stick with him, love him, listen to his concerns and support him no matter what happens. This kind of unconditional love will help your husband understand that God also loves and values him and wants to share an eternal fellowship with him (Genesis 1-2; Romans 5:8; John 13:34).

With your unconditional love, you may also help your husband deal with any negative emotions he may experience. He needs to know that others do not blame him or feel he is guilty of doing something wrong. If he did make a mistake that caused the job loss, you can help him find forgiveness and a new beginning. Our Lord has warned us of the dangers of emotions like bitterness, envy, jealousy, hatred, resentment and anger (Ephesians 4:31-32; Galatians 5:19-21). That one may experience these emotions in a time like this should not be surprising. He does not need words of condemnation. He needs a patient listening ear (James 1:19) to help him admit these feeling so he can find grace for himself and forgive anyone who may have wronged him.

In addition, you can encourage your husband to fill any free time with meaningful service toward others.

He may want to volunteer at a local food or clothing bank, offer his services to a nearby school, help coach a little league ball team or simply rake a neighbor's yard. Such service will help give a sense of purpose to his life at this time. Jesus both taught and exemplified the principle of service throughout his life (Mark 10:45; John 13:12-17)

Above all, help your husband to trust in God and to surround himself with other caring people of faith. A caring, grace-filled church will support, love and help in whatever way needed to get through this stressful time. That's what the early Christians did for one another (Acts 2:42-45) and that's what the Bible teaches Christians to do for one another today (Romans 12:9-13). To those who were anxious about food, clothing and other necessities in life, Jesus said, "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well" (Matthew 6:33).

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