

Prayers for the Unemployed

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You are welcome and encouraged to share these prayers with anyone dealing with unemployment, providing you credit me as the author and cite my web site <https://HowWiseThen.com> as the source. All the but the last prayer were written in response to massive downsizing and lay-offs of the 1980s. These prayers are based on our family's experience with unemployment during that time frame; primarily due to being in the wrong place at the wrong time. The final prayer is in response to the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic that left millions jobless as we struggled to contain a highly contagious, and potentially deadly, virus too small to see.

It's Not Just Me

I guess I knew that -- in my head.

But my heart was sure it was me.

Some horrible flaw in me that made me lose the job.

But it's not me. It's not.

I mean, of course I made mistakes. Who doesn't?

But it's not that, that made me lose the job.

There are others. Many others.

I had no idea how many others.

There are hundreds of us. Just in this city.

And others in other cities in this state.

And in other states too. And other countries.

There are thousands and thousands of us.

We want to work.

We will work.

We do good work.

But we lost our jobs.
The company was going under.
Or they needed a new style of management.
Or the boss wanted new players. Or whatever.
The reasons don't matter much.
They don't help.
Knowing why doesn't really address the how.

How do we find new jobs?
How do we survive through this draught?
How do we deal with the stress?
It helps knowing I'm not the only one.
I have lots of company. Lots of it.

I know who I am.
I am someone who wants to work. I can work. I will work.
Lord, work with me to get me back to work.
And while I'm waiting, grant me courage to tell it like it is.
I lost my job. And I've got lots of company.

On Being Rejected, Again

It's a numbers game.

Put out 100 resumes.

Hear back on 10.

Get one interview.

"Thank you for your time. I'm sorry but your skills--
while they are many--aren't quite what we wanted."

Put out another 100 resumes.

Hear back on 10.

Get one interview.

"Sorry--you've got good qualifications--but not what we need right now."

Put out more resumes.

Oh, God. I have no strength left to put out more resumes.

To make more calls.

To read more job openings.

The odds are against me.

"Bad attitude."

That's what they say about people like me."

"Got a bad attitude. That one does."

Perhaps I do.

If so--I'm sorry. Forgive me.

I am weak.

I am weary.

I am defeated.

But you are not.

You are strong.

Well Lord--as awful as it is, this numbers game--I know no other way.

Grant me strength to go it one more round.

Maybe this time one of the 10 who respond will say,

"Welcome aboard."

Grant me strength, Lord. I have none.

Thank you, God, that you do.

Thank you for your strength that sustains me.

I'm Tired of Being Patient

I don't like being patient.

Waiting for you to lead.

Wondering what lies in store for this family.

Worrying about money.

I'm sick of it.

I really am.

I want to do something.

Go somewhere.

Have something to mark on that calendar.

Be interrupted by a phone call.

I am tired of waiting.

Not knowing.

Not being in charge.

Not knowing what to do with myself.

I am tired of hearing all the advice.

"If I were you. . ."

Well, they are not me.

And they're not in this particular boat.

I am sick until death of waiting and trusting and being patient. But I see no other option.

Oh, God. I do not like where I am.

But I don't know where else to be.

My patience is gone. If I ever had any.

If I ever did, it's gone now.

And I really don't want any more.

What I want is an end to this--I want a job.

Now. Please?

What?

"In due season?"

That's it? In due season?

And in the meantime, what do I do?

Just wait some more?

I guess you know how hard waiting is.

I guess you've had to wait plenty on us--on me.

Are you tired of being patient with us?

Thank you that you continue to be.

OK. If I can't have a job, can I have another helping of patience?

I used up the last batch you gave me.

Little Things Help a Lot

Funny, how when I was employed, I so often overlooked the little things.
So many little acts of kindness.
They help so much.

“Use me for a reference,” from a man I hardly know.
“I need another copy of your resume,” from a woman who’s already taken five.
“We’ve been thinking about you,” from friends not seen in years.

“How can I help?” from the Sunday morning church coffee-pot crew.
“You’re in our prayers,” from a neighbor I’d never discuss faith with.

You are everywhere aren’t you, Lord?
Guiding.
Sustaining.
Helping.
Healing.
Holding out hope.

Thank you for the little things.
The little acts of kindness that lighten the load.
That remind that you have not forsaken me.

They help.
Funny how I never realized that so much before.

The Tension Is Terrible

I know she cares. I know that.
And I thank you for it. I couldn't stand if I didn't have her support.
Support. Literally.
We need her income.
And emotionally. I need that even more.

But the tension is getting to me.
Doesn't she understand how hard this is?
How humiliating this is? How frustrating this is?

God, I feel like a beggar.
Knocking on doors. Being rejected.
Turned down. Put on hold.
Waiting for return calls that never come.

Pacing. Waiting for job offer letters that aren't delivered.
When she asks if I've heard.
"Have they called?"
"Well, did you call them?"

Well, Lord, I feel like I'm being punished.
Like she's scolding me with a rolled-up paper, like a little puppy.

I know she cares. I know that.
But I wish she understood. I don't need a nudge. I need a hole to hide in.
Maybe she does understand.
Maybe she's afraid I'll crawl down in a hole of humiliation and never come out.
Help me accept her questions as signs of concern; rather than criticism.

And, maybe, even learn to joke about it all--a little.
We used to joke a lot. May we not lose that too along with the job.
Maybe what we need now is a little levity.
Is it OK to laugh when you feel like crying?
I hope so. Laughter relieves the tension.
We've got plenty of that around here. Laugh.
God, it is ludicrous.

Us. Worrying so much. Like you can't cover this one.
Of course you can.
What am I worrying about?

I've got you. I've got her. You both love me.
I know that. Thank you, Lord for that.

It's Hard to Be Grateful

I am trying. I really am trying to be grateful for this gift of time.

Time to reflect.

Time to read.

Time to talk. But it's hard.

The truth is, I'm not really grateful that I have this time.

The truth is, it hurts to be around people who are busy . . .

Did I sound like that with my constant complaining? Or was I bragging?

About the fullness of my calendar and the shortness of my days.

God, if I was like that, forgive me.

It's hard to go to meetings and have everyone else have to dash.

Off to someplace else, and I could stay.

I could stay all day. I could stay all week.

I wish I couldn't.

I wish I had someplace -- anyplace I had to be.

I wish I had people making demands on my time.

Interrupting me again. Asking me questions.

Wanting to know if I could come to this meeting.

If I had time for this conversation.

Time. That's about all I have right now.

Time. I know it is your creation.

I believe it is your gift.

I am trying to be grateful for it. I am trying.

I am not succeeding very well.

Lord, grant me forgiveness for my ingratitude.

Enable me to accept graciously this gift of time you offer.

May I fill it with sensible things.

Good talks with old friends.

Long walks in the beauty of your creation.

Diligence in reading the job openings, sending out resumes.

Returning phone calls . . . even ones I know lead nowhere.

At least it gives me practice.

Enable me to fill this time with good things that will one day bear fruit again.

Be a testimony to your goodness.

Protect me from the temptation to believe my worth lies in my ability to produce.

Time. It is a gift. A precious gift. It is life itself.

And you give us such generous measures of it. Thank you.

Lord, I Am Jealous

I envy my best friend.

I can't tell if I want what my friend has in a job --
Or if I so desperately don't want what I've got -- unemployment.

But I am jealous.

I choke back tears when the tales of the job start.
I can hardly force myself to listen.
I cannot ask any questions.

I want to avoid my friend.

My friend who came with wine and sympathy when word got out that I was out.
My friend who said, "It could have happened to anyone of us."
This friend who said, "Let me know if you need financial help."

My friend who keeps creating low and no-cost forms of diversion to keep me company.

My friend who gives me leads and never asks if I've followed up on them.
Lord, I am jealous of this friend.
I want to pull away.
Stay away.
Go away.

Somewhere. Anywhere.

Where no one knows me or my situation.
God, I'm sorry. This friend is you. You come to me often through this friend.
I can't avoid you.
I would never survive.
So, I must not avoid this friend either.

Help me accept these nagging feelings of jealousy.

A small price to pay for the friendship you offer.
A price I can afford; even without a job.

Thank you for this friend who stays by me.

Even when I'm jealous.

I Trusted Them

A lot of things hurt.

The shock and fear of the uncertain future.

The embarrassment now of telling friends and family.

The weariness of hunting for another job.

The loneliness of being away from all the people at work.

The hurt of telling the kids, "No. Not now. No money."

But what hurts the most, Lord, is that I trusted them.

I was someone who cared about quality.

Someone who treated colleagues and clients with dignity and respect.

They said they wanted someone who cared about that.

I did those things, Lord.

I took time to know them.

I took time away from my family to help them out.

I gave them a lot more than my time.

I gave them part of my heart.

Because I believed it was the right thing to do.

Was I wrong? Is it wrong to put people above profits?

Is it wrong to give extra time and effort to do a good job?

I believed them.

The challenge of being part of a team.

And now, they've kicked me off the team.

That hurts, Lord. A lot.

Will I ever get over this sense of failure?

This sense of rejection?

This hole where my trust in them has been ripped out?

I pray, Lord, that I will.

Lord, let me not be bitter.

Let me still be proud of how I did what I believed was right.

I put my trust in you.

Only you will not deceive me.

Only you will sustain me.

Thank you, God, for that.

Thank you too, for listening.

It helps.

I'll have a lot more time now to talk.

A lot. I hope you're willing to work overtime while I'm out of work.

O Lord, who could have believed it could hurt this much to lose a job?

Thank you, God that your love is greater than this pain. Thank God.

I Don't Want to Talk About It

It's hard enough to wake up every morning and realize--again
That I have no job I have to go to today.
That the day will consist of either looking for work--
Or feeling guilty about not looking.
But to have to keep answering people's questions is too much.
"Have you tried. . .?"
"I know this guy and he. . ."
"Gee, when that happened to me, I. . ."
Frankly, Lord, they bug me. I realize they want to help.
I acknowledge that I need their leads and support.
But I do not want to talk about it.

Why is that?
Am I still unable to separate myself from the job I used to have?
Am I still unable to see that I am a whole person?
Even with the gaping hole in my life?

I don't know.
I only know, I do not want to talk about it.
But I can't not talk about it.
The job loss and the need for a replacement consume me.
It's all I think about.
I confess, it's all I care about.

God, how could I be so attached to the job I used to complain about so much?
Oh, God help! Help me talk about it when people ask.
Help me volunteer information so they don't have to keep asking.
Help me think of something else to do once in a while.

Like you. And how you were with me before this job.
And were with me on that job.
And are here with me now without that job.
And will be with me wherever I go from here.

Free me up to think about that, and maybe learn how to talk about that.
Your concern and support are a lot more interesting than all that job talk.
I want to talk about that.
I don't know how exactly to do that; but I know I want to try.
Teach me, Lord.

Teach me to talk about the things in life that matter.

Of Fishes and Loaves

At first, I felt rather foolish saying it.

“Come on over. We’d love to have you come for supper.”

Because the pantry was nearly bare.

The freezer was nearly depleted.

A pound of hamburger.

A half box of spaghetti.

That’s all.

And no money.

No dashing out to get more.

No money.

I panicked when they said,

“Sure. We’ll come.”

Oh, God.

What will we feed them?

How can I tell them?

You must be laughing.

You who made two fish and some bread feed the thousands.

To think a pound of hamburger and some spaghetti

couldn’t feed an extra family.

It was a feast.

The food was adequate. More than adequate.

Since they brought most of it.

Thank you, God for people who ask,

“What shall I bring?”

But it was the company that was divine.

How good it was to laugh again.

To tell jokes.

To remember old victories.

And defeats.

To swap successes.

And sorrows.

How wonderfully healing.

Amazing what you can do with a pound of hamburger.

And a half box of spaghetti.

Amazing.

Will This Ever End?

The year 2020 had such great potential.

It went so terribly wrong so soon.

A virus too small to see changed everything.

COVID-19 has gone on and on and on.

“Wait until summer. Things will be better then.”

They weren't. If anything, they were worse.

“Wait until fall. Surely, things will be better by then.”

By fall parents, teachers, and students faced more isolation and separation.

Or risked getting and spreading the virus.

Learn in-person or on-line? Which one? Who gets to decide?

So many jobs lost. Restaurant and hospitality staffs.

Tourism and transportation workers.

Actors, producers, directors, crews of live entertainment.

Retail shops large and small.

Hash tags #InThisTogether spring up on social media like weeds.

#InThisTogether. Yes, indeed. Every country. Every nationality.

With some suffering more than others. Essential works we call them.

Go to work and risk bringing it home? Don't go to work, lose a job and face eviction?

Telecommute if you can. Panic if you can't.

Shop from home. Visit electronically from home. Or through windows.

Take out or delivered meals. Dine-in at your own risk.

What happens when the jobs go away but the virus does not?

Good God, we need a plan.

We need some consensus on how to respond.

We need more mutual cooperation and respect.

More research. More protective supplies and equipment.

More money. More time. Appreciation for those previously overlooked.

Shelf-stockers; delivery men and women; tech people.

Cleaning crews, nurses, lab technicians.

Remind us, gracious God, how we live together in one global village.

Remind us that what disrupts life here, impacts life there as well.

Remind us that we improve our chances of outsmarting this pestilence

When we come together for the sake of one another.

How long, oh Lord. How long?

Show us how to care for one another as you care for each of us.

If we learn how to do that, then maybe 2020 was a good year after all.