

Devotions for unemployed offered_61404

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MURFREESBORO, Tenn. (RNS)-When Richard Malone lost his job in 2001, he prayed to God. Not once, not twice, not only when he lost himself in despair, but every day. And he took notes.

Malone, of Murfreesboro, Tenn., spent six months mourning his old job and finding a new one. And then he published his notes.

The result is "Devotions for Job Seekers: Daily Encouragement Along the Way."



This is Malone's second run at a prayer guide. He wrote his first one, published in 1992, before he had lived through unemployment. In this case, there's no substitute for real experience.

Losing a job, whether by layoff, firing or quitting, can transform a person's prayer life, Malone said in an interview. "It's a time that drives you to God. You question everything that you're doing. ... So many things-your whole self-worth and who you are as a person-seem to be up for grabs."

The losses keep mounting the entire time a person is without work, he said. The unemployed lose not only a paycheck but friendships, identity, purpose, direction, self-esteem-"the things at the core of your being," he said. And the unemployed lose a place to go every day.

Malone kept a prayer journal, matching Scripture passages to his own meditations and his prayers. He shared the results with others in his church and submitted the second version of his book to three publishers. The one publisher who once had been without a job is the one who bought the book.

Malone, 55, divided 120 meditations into three stages he says he lived through in his search for his current job, overseeing the purchase of wholesale religious books and music.

The devotions move from shock over the initial impact of unemployment through a long period of waiting, when anger turns to worry and frustration, and into a time of figuring out what's been learned and what should be done differently in the next job.

Malone was surprised by the comfort the Bible had to offer-psalms that helped him work through extreme emotions and stories of Old Testament heroes such as Abraham, Moses and Joseph, who waited 10, 20 or 30 years for understanding.

In the end, Malone gained a new understanding of what the Bible teaches, he said. "God is more interested in who you are than what you are doing."

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