

## INTRODUCTION

**L**ayoffs. Firings. Downsizing. Furloughs. Reductions in force. Company jargon calls it lots of things, but for those of us on the receiving end of it, it's simply: unemployment. It's happened to almost everyone I know. For some, it came suddenly and unexpectedly. Others get lots of lead time, like a crash in slow motion.

In my case, I was let go three times in ten years. The first time was during the Great Recession. The second was a "shift in strategy." The third saw the elimination of my entire department. None of these times were easy, but each one taught me something new and made me more resilient. I am not eager for there to be a fourth. But if there is, I feel prepared for it.

The following meditations are meant to be practical, personal, and actionable. As with so many other things—unemployment is equal parts art and science. We cannot simply endure the dismissal of a job loss without feeling, acknowledging, and ultimately overcoming the many feelings unemployment brings with it. Our hearts and minds may race with worry and loss—and prayers asking God to grant us specific blessings to undertake the work necessary to overcome them. And while not a tutorial, there are practices here that should help job seekers turn reflection into action.

May God grant you the endurance you need to get through this horribly difficult time. And take it from one who has been there: you will.

# This Is Just One Moment in a Long Career

## **PONDER**

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Whether you've lost a job after 15 years or 15 minutes, this time is just one moment in a journey. If you believe your work was ever stable, consider the number of other moments you've experienced along the way. Projects change. Colleagues move on. Customers come and go. Years are up and down. This moment—painful as it is—is simply one more moment in a long career filled with them.

## **PRAY**

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*God, I feel as though this period will last forever—that it will be the final word in my work. Please help me to remember the ever-changing nature of my world against the constant promise of your love. Walk with me through this moment as you have in so many moments before it, and as you will through so many more moments to come.*

## **PRACTICE**

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Remember that most people will have eleven to twelve jobs between the ages of 18 and 48. Expect and embrace change, even when it's not on your terms.

# Fear and Anxiety

## PONDER

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The fear and anxiety that comes along with losing a job can be crippling. So much is uncertain, and life can feel unfamiliar in an instant. Feeling this way is natural, but it is not inevitable, and more importantly, it's not permanent. Conflict (like losing a job) can bring about two kinds of stress: distress and eustress. Everyone is familiar with distress; it brings with it worry and despair. Eustress, on the other hand, prompts an active response, one we can use to get things done and propel us toward our goal. Whenever you can, try to convert your worry to action and harness the power of eustress.

## PRAY

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*God, I am filled with worry, and so much feels as though it is out of my control. Help me to face my fear. Please grant me harmony—the power to recognize that the same pressure I feel that is causing me anxiety can also be used as a motivator to take back control.*

## PRACTICE

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The key to harnessing eustress is action. Distress is giving power to the past that cannot be changed and to the future that cannot be seen. Eustress gives power to the now. In the face of so many things out of control, you can control your job search. You control its pace, you control your effort, and you can control how prepared you are for opportunities that come your way. Don't dwell in distress. Live in the now, and put that worry to work.

# Allow Others to Help

## **PONDER**

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As Americans, we have a long history of “rugged individualism.” We embrace a “pull yourself up by your bootstraps” mentality. This is nonsense. No one gets where they want to go completely in isolation. It is perfectly okay to need—and to ask for—others’ help when you lose a job.

## **PRAY**

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*Lord, grant me the humility to know when to ask for help in this time. Help me to remember that as Catholics we are more than individuals. We are a community of faith. We belong to a community of saints. Allow me the wisdom to ask for what I need from the people who can help me.*

## **PRACTICE**

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Know your strengths... and your weaknesses. Friends, family, former colleagues, the internet, and the library all have resources to fill the gaps that are holding you back. Know first what you need, then identify those who can help, and then ask them.

# You're Not Alone

## **PONDER**

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It's a cliché, but it also happens to be true: you're not alone. As of spring 2020, nearly 40 million Americans had applied for unemployment benefits. That may be small comfort, of course, but it's also a reminder that you are not responsible for this crisis, and you are not alone in it.

## **PRAY**

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*God, this journey feels lonely and frustrating. Help me to remember that others are on this path too. When I feel singled out or sorry for myself, help me to rediscover my compassion for those who are going through this with me.*

## **PRACTICE**

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When you're feeling isolated, find others who've found new jobs. Although they may not be in a position to help you with a new role, ask them what they did that helped them land a new position. Keep what is useful to you, and try applying their ideas to your search.

# There Can Be Grace in This Time

## PONDER

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Not all of us have the luxury of using our layoff as an opportunity to reimagine our work life. We have bills to pay, families to care for, and lives to lead. However—unexpected and unpleasant as it can be—losing a job can allow us the space to pursue new jobs we might never have considered otherwise. Maybe God is calling us to a new vocation, or maybe just to a shorter commute. Use this time to find out.

## PRAY

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*God, I have been consumed with losing my job and finding another. Please bless me with perspective in this time of confusion and uncertainty. Help me to find the grace in this moment, that “freely given, unmerited favor and love” you give to help me discern my true next step—one that allows me to thrive and grow by honoring my talents and challenging me to be better, not just different.*

## PRACTICE

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It’s not always necessary to find a new job that is a copy-and-paste of what you just finished doing. Stop, if only for a moment. What did you like about your last job? What did you hate? Is doing the same thing the right thing for you? Or do you want something new? What do you have to do to get there? A degree or certificate? Is the “something new” you want more money, fewer hours, or more flexibility? Identify what your next step needs to be in order to meet what you want.