



4 Tips for Pastors to support the unemployed

Every year in our country, 21.7 million (Bureau of Labor Statistics 10-year average) people lose a job they did not want to lose. Compare that to 1.7 million people who are diagnosed with cancer each year or 2.6 million deaths. A congregation will have more members experience unemployment in a year than any other health or relationship issue, yet many churches have no strategy to support the employed. Don't miss the opportunity to walk with them in one of life's major challenges. Here are 4 tips to help you.

1. *Make unemployment an open topic in your congregation*

Do you ever talk or preach about unemployment? Do you remember those who are unemployed in the prayers? If you do not, how will they know you care about those who are unemployed? If they do not believe you care, they will not reach out to let you know if they become unemployed. Consider preaching about the emotions being experienced by those who are unemployed ([How Long, O Lord, How Long?](#) – 80 sermon ideas), i.e.:

Anger	Fear/worry/anxiety	Self-confidence
Despair	Identity	Self-worth
Embarrassment & shame	Loneliness/isolation	Waiting

2. *Ask, or you may never know*

The unemployed struggle with embarrassment and shame, so they rarely reach out on their own and instead keep to themselves or quietly drift away. To address this your congregation needs to proactively seek out those who are unemployed. Ask them to notify the church staff if they become unemployed or when they know of someone in the congregation who is unemployed. As you read this, you probably cringe because you are pressed already with commitments and available resources. It is understandable, but if you are not proactive, chances are good you will not know when someone is unemployed until they find a new job, and maybe not even then. They will suffer in silence and forever remember the response of their church when they were in need. Some will leave the church and you will never know why.

3. *Pick up the phone – Engineer care*

The unemployed need an ongoing connection with those who care about them. Once you know someone is unemployed, there needs to be a system in place for someone to reach out and connect with them for a conversation. It does not have to be the Pastor. Utilize your current care ministry structure to provide support. As an example, if you utilize Stephen Ministers to provide care, educate them on the challenges of unemployment and let them make the connection and provide care.

Consider creating a support system utilizing those in your congregation who have previously been unemployed to meet and walk with the unemployed on their journey. They will love the opportunity to give back and help others.

Consider gifting copies of [How Long, O Lord, How Long?](#) to those who are unemployed. Utilize the [group study](#), which provides you all you need to help the unemployed in your congregation and community.

If they are married, make certain to seek out their spouse to see how they are doing. The spouse is on the same journey, but rarely does anyone ask how they are doing.

4. *Leverage your network*

The unemployed need to be active meeting new people, which helps them to get the word out regarding their skills and availability. Congregations are an excellent source of assistance, with a built-in network, but are too often underutilized. As Pastor, do not underestimate your impact, or that of your staff, in connecting people. When you call a member of the congregation or community leader and ask them to meet with your unemployed member, chances are good they will agree. You can then connect them by e-mail or phone, having opened the door for your member, helping to grow their network.

Excerpts of [How Long, O Lord, How Long?](#) and other additional resources are available at dalekreienkamp.com.