

SAMPLER

AARON M. BASKO

HELP WANTED

devotions
for Job Seekers



Foreword by R. Paul Stevens

From the Foreword

In today's economy, lifetime employment is almost extinct. Vocational discernment is not a one-shot thing to be undertaken on college graduation. It is a lifelong process. And I emphasize *process* because, in this extraordinary volume, Aaron Basko has crafted a holistic process of reflection, action, and spiritual development that could serve us all in the lifelong pilgrimage of finding the right fit for our daily work.

In reality there is no perfect fit in this life—that must wait for the new heaven and new earth—but Basko has set out to provide help in finding work that substantially fits our character, giftedness, values, and passions. And he does so in a way that is truly accessible to all. A certified career development counselor and member of numerous professional organizations, Basko has assisted generations of students to find suitable employment. But he offers one more commendable credential as author of this book of devotions: he shares his own job-search story, wringing this inspirational and practical book out of his personal experience.

Will you be certain to find a wonderful job by reading this book? Perhaps. But even more important you become a job-seeker that is worth being sought—not only by a potential employer but by the Divine Headhunter who is Author and Founder of our faith. Read this fabulous resource. Inwardly digest, and stick with it to the end, and then go back and read it again—perhaps years later, the next time you find yourself walking this road of discovery again.

R. Paul Stevens

Marketplace Mentor and Author

*The Other Six Days, Doing God's Business,
Taking Your Soul to Work, and Work Matters*

In the Hope of Glory

All this is for your benefit, so that the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God. —2 Corinthians 4:15

The world's message is that your value depends on position—your job title, annual income, and academic degree. According to this way of thinking, the job hunt is something to be ashamed of, perhaps because it suggests that you can't inspire employers to come looking for you. But why do those of us who belong to Jesus fall for this? After all, we believe that the Son of the living God died on a cross to show how much we are worth to him. Jesus did so without checking any credentials, giving up his own position in glory without regard for any of our accomplishments, or lack of them.

In an even bigger gamble, Jesus entrusted his kingdom to a ragtag group of rough fishermen, corrupt tax collectors, and religious extremists who deserted their leader right before the cross. Your résumé looks great compared to those of the twelve disciples! Why should we be ashamed of our talents, our hopes, and our efforts to discover the work for which we were created when God was willing to take such wild risks on us?

Remember the example of Jesus, who gave up a throne in heaven's glory to sojourn with us on the dusty roads of first-century Judea? Is it possible that this trying time in our professional lives, when the job market deals out plenty of black eyes, can actually become a time of triumph? Can it be a time when we hear God's voice more clearly and when God's glory shines through our situation? Romans 5:2-5 says: "We boast in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and

character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us."

We can count on God's promise that we are reaping benefits from our trying time. The Romans 5 passage above may seem scary because it explains that often it is suffering that matures us and grants us unshakable hope. If you are reading this book, however, chances are you are already suffering through the challenges that come with the job hunt. Therefore, you can be sure that the "good stuff" promised in this verse—perseverance, strong character, and God's hope, which does not disappoint—is on its way if you are seeking the Lord's will as diligently as you are seeking new employment.

As you take on the challenges of the job search, be on the lookout also for what God is doing. If your eyes are open, you will see the Lord's glory shine through for your good!

One Small Step for Today

One of the first steps of a job hunt is compiling an up-to-date résumé detailing your education, skills, work history, and other experience. Imagine the great Bible heroes, such as Moses or Esther, Paul or Mary Magdalene, writing their own résumés. How would those résumés have looked before they discovered God's purpose—and then after? Now look at your own résumé. Highlight any area that may be a barrier to finding meaningful work—lack of education, experience, or skills. How might the Lord receive glory in these areas of weakness or lack?

Speedy Delivery

*The human mind plans the way,
but the LORD directs the steps.*

—Proverbs 16:9, NRSV

About ten years ago, I began hiring people in my job as a manager in higher education. Since then I have noticed a pattern. God brings me exactly whom I need when I need that person—but not much before. It is amazing how often I have thought, *How will I ever fill this vacancy?* or *How can we possibly tackle this new project?* only to find that the right person appears on the doorstep as if the Lord has just sent me a really big overnight package.

I still worry about getting the right staff, but it is always a thrill when I sense that God has arranged a match. I have found employees who seem to have average skills until they begin work. Suddenly I discover there is a big *S* on their chests and they leap tall buildings in a single bound. At other times, experienced workers whose career paths look like a game of Chutes and Ladders somehow find me through strange connections.

Our Creator is amazing at fitting the right person for the right place. God is a master craftsman who has a deep toolbox. If we are willing to become an instrument in the Lord's hand, we often find ourselves moved to the right work site. Isn't that a comfort?

The best news in this for the job seeker is that I'm not the only boss in need of just the right person to show up at the right time or the only boss looking for someone to be the solution to my problems. Prospective employers are out there right at this moment looking for you; they just don't know it yet. Trust me, someone is looking for you.

Don't be discouraged that your résumé doesn't match the exact description, and don't give up if your logical steps and plans aren't getting the results you want. The Lord will determine your steps if you allow it, and in my experience God will often do so by preparing a need that you were created to fill. Somewhere a manager is saying, "Who can help me with this?" The Lord may have arranged the problem so that you can be the solution.

One Small Step for Today

The best marketing strategy is to advertise a product based not on its features (the car is red with a good sound system) but on its benefits (it will impress your friends). You want to demonstrate that your product is a solution to someone's problem. In the job market, *you* are the product that can solve an employer's problem. Use this formula to market yourself in your résumé and in response to common interview questions: Describe how your features (strong work ethic, proven leadership) produce crucial benefits (any project you give me will be done on time), and provide proof (I saved my last company \$10,000 on just one project). Think about the types of problems your target company faces and be ready to show that you are the solution!

Give Me a Push

My child, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, or lose heart when you are punished by him; for the Lord disciplines those whom he loves, and chastises every child whom he accepts. —Hebrews 12:5-6, NRSV

My friend and colleague Charlie has a fantastic story of God's intervening in his life to change its direction. One day I asked him how he decided that career services was the right fit for him. With a twinkle in his eye, he said, "You want to hear the whole story?"

Charlie started college, but after marriage, he dropped out and worked in a coal mine for the next sixteen years. Eventually his wife convinced him to finish his degree, but he never expected to use it. "[Coal mining] was all I knew," he told me. "I hadn't really seen anything else. I probably would have stayed in the mines for thirty years if God hadn't given me a push."

That push came in the form of a layoff. Suddenly Charlie realized he had no real plan. "I went to see the career services director at the college where I had finished my degree and said, 'You have to help me!' I met with him ten times."

Charlie did get help, but the career services director also pointed him toward an opening as an admissions representative at the college. "Can you imagine what my application must have looked like? I was a thirty-eight-year-old miner with absolutely no experience in any area of higher education. My résumé basically consisted of the different types of equipment I knew how to use. I can only think that my contact in career services helped me get it."

Charlie was a hardworking admissions representative who moved up to interim director when his boss had to take a leave

of absence. Soon the director of career services position opened up. He has been counseling students in their career planning ever since. “I look back and say, ‘How did I ever get here?’” he admits. “But sometimes God has to extract you from where you feel comfortable.”

There are times in life when we get comfortable where we are. We become inflexible and lose our sensitivity to God’s movements. In those cases, the Lord may need to pry us out of our hiding spots. It can be an unnerving and painful experience. It may be tempting to become bitter or to blame the people God uses to force us in another direction. But God allows a jarring experience to move us out where the Spirit can guide us forward.

You may be in a job hunt precisely because you’ve been “extracted.” God has allowed an unwelcome push to tell you it is time to move on to the next part of your journey. Don’t resent the change. This is for God’s glory and your good, so use this time to regain your flexibility and sensitivity to God’s will. Be pliable in God’s hands and watch the Master at work moving you to places you never would have expected.

One Small Step for Today

Networking is building and investing in relationships that can help you identify job opportunities, such as Charlie’s relationship with the career services director. Who do you already know who has connections in your desired field—friends and family, former teachers or coaches, your doctor or mail carrier? When they ask how you are doing, let them know you have been hard at work on your job search. Ask if they have any advice or if they know anyone who could help you. The more people you know, the more likely you are to be connected with someone who can point you in the right direction.

Faster Than a Speeding Bullet

*I have been very zealous for the LORD
God Almighty. . . . I am the only one left,
and now they are trying to kill me too.*
—1 Kings 19:10

In 1 Kings 19 we have a picture of the prophet Elijah at his worst. Just a chapter earlier, the Lord let Elijah save the day. Elijah said one prayer, and fire fell from heaven. The powerful fireworks display convinced the people of God's might, and Elijah destroyed his opposition. The prophet prayed again, and the long drought ended. Finally, Elijah, filled with the Spirit of God, did a "faster than a speeding bullet" routine and raced King Ahab's chariot to the city of Jezreel.

But even Superman has his weakness, and Elijah's kryptonite was the death threat that Jezebel sent him. Hadn't Elijah just achieved great victory in the Lord's name? Hadn't he proven that his God was more powerful than Jezebel's? But suddenly he was fleeing for his life. He wandered off into the desert, slouched under a tree, and turned on the drama. "I have had enough, LORD," he said. "Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors" (verse 4).

Like Elijah, we sometimes fall into despair. After a long struggle to serve God and provide for our families, the last straw comes in the form of what may otherwise seem to be a little rejection, a small disappointment, an easy-to-overcome obstacle. Maybe it is because we are trying to play Superman. We strive to guarantee ourselves success by doing everything right: polished résumé, impeccable interview suit, Web presence, LinkedIn profile, Facebook network. But deep down we all know that the Superman image is an illusion. We are not in control. The car breaks down on the

way to an interview. We miss a call from a potential employer. We spill coffee on our new suit. Another candidate lands the dream job. Then we get asked a well-intended but spirit-sapping question: “No luck with the job hunt?”

Elijah’s story illustrates how God works in our lives even in our darkest moments—even when we are inclined to wallow alone and in despair. Thank God for showing compassion and patience in those times! The Lord nourishes us, adjusts and restores our perspective, and finally gives us a task to get us moving forward again.

Playing Superman is fun, but when you eventually get knocked from the sky, the fall is shocking. Your loss of control may even make you question God’s power and provision. It may cause you to forget the promises of Scripture and to neglect the life-line of prayer. Thankfully, the Lord continues to send nourishment—whether through ravens (1 Kings 17:1-6), a poor widow (17:8-16), or the angels themselves (19:3-9). Keep welcoming this nourishment so that you will have strength to adjust when God shows up with a display of power and a new assignment.

When you catch yourself turning on the drama because of a small setback, rest up, eat well, and prepare for a fresh encounter with the Lord. It is God’s way of reminding us that we don’t need to be Superman; God is the one with the power and the resources to save the day.

One Small Step for Today

Your job search may be just the motivation you needed to get serious about daily Bible study. Just as the angel prepared food and water for Elijah before his journey up the mountain, God has given us Scripture to nourish our hearts. If you are going to be ready to hear what God has for you and follow the Spirit’s guidance, you need to be well fed. Some of the Scriptures that have encouraged me are in the Psalms, the Gospel of John, and the epistles of Colossians and 1 Peter. God may lead you to others. Keep those verses close as you journey together with the Lord.

Showdown

For I am with you, and no one is going to attack and harm you, because I have many people in this city. —Acts 18:10

All job seekers face the burdens of self-doubt and insecurity; even the new college graduate wonders what the future holds and how she or he is going to face it. In a difficult economy, desperation adds an edge to the uncertainty. But to those universal challenges that obstruct the road ahead, the mature job seeker adds the load of family responsibilities, a thirty-year mortgage, a car payment, and shrinking retirement funds, which crowd around like gun-slingers at the O.K. Corral.

For the job changer, the question is, “Do I jump into the churning sea, or do I try to patch up a dilapidated raft?” The risk is bigger when you have invested years in your current position or field. It is more common for job changers to have families or other responsibilities that will have to jump with them.

Job changers are also often more subject to criticism than first-time seekers, even from friends and family. Someone always seems to ask, “Isn’t that a big risk to take with a family to support? Besides, don’t you already have a job that pays the bills? And what about all those years of studying for this career?”

If God is leading you toward something else, you’ll want to have an answer ready for those who question you. This will keep discouragement away and keep you connected to what God is showing you day by day. Some people make critical comments because they would not have the courage to jump from their own rafts. Instead of pointing this out, however, be quietly confident and remind them that you already trust God for the big things—

your life and well-being. Surely you can trust the Lord with your work as well.

In job change situations, sometimes just knowing that you are doing the right thing is the hardest part. Start with prayer. But you should also ask God to send backup. Mature job changers often feel that they are alone—that they are the only ones taking this kind of risk and that no one understands. That's why part of your prayer should be that God would send you reinforcements. A couple of good friends or professional contacts who are praying for your success can make a huge difference. When the gunslingers start to circle, it helps to have a posse at your back.

Well before I arrived at my current job, the Lord had already been preparing the path. Not only had God clearly guided me along the way, but I found out later that two of the staff members in my office had asked their Bible study group to pray for nearly nine months that God would bring the right person into my position. God answered their prayers.

They saw me as the answer to that prayer. Ask God which of these contacts you should ask to guard your back. Critics are easy to find, but whom can you reach out to who will stand behind you in prayer and ride with you in tough terrain? When your doubts circle you, ask God to call in the reinforcements.

One Small Step for Today

Prayer is like the plow that turns over the hard earth and creates deep furrows in the ground so that seeds will take root instead of just blowing away. Make a list of the people you can count on to pray for you until God opens the right door. Ask them to pray for you until you find a position. You want all the backup you can get.

Flex Your Joy

Do not grieve, for the joy of the LORD is your strength. —Nehemiah 8:10

My job search had started to grow long and I was tired. My initial this-will-be-an-adventure attitude had worn off. I had done some networking and sent out a bunch of résumés. I even responded to the Spirit's nudging to explore job opportunities far afield from my education and experience, but so far—nothing. The jobs I felt I wanted didn't seem to want me. I needed a new source of strength.

This verse from Nehemiah had always puzzled me. “The joy of the LORD is your strength.” It sounded like an equation, but one with a piece missing. I wanted strength, but how could I get it? It comes from the joy of the Lord. Great, but where would I find the joy? In the midst of a discouraging and prolonged job search, I couldn't see an answer.

As God continued to lead me from one job possibility to another, I bumped into this verse again and something clicked. God wasn't just moving slowly because I could not go any faster. I realized that the Lord actually liked talking with me and speaking into my life. I also recognized that I really liked conversing back, whether or not I received the answer I was anticipating.

It finally occurred to me that I was reading the verse incorrectly. It was not talking about a type of joy that belongs to the Lord that I should covet as a blessing, but about the joy of the presence of the Lord. It is the kind of joy that wells up within my spirit when I experience merely being with the Lord, experiencing the person and presence of God. This joy, and the strength

that comes with it, is not something God gives or withholds. It is something we absorb from spending time with God.

As this dawned on me, my question started to change from “Lord, what is the final answer to my job question?” to “Lord, what do you want to show me today?” As I tried on new job possibilities, I realized that I was equipped to do lots of things if God said the word, and that took some of the pressure off. I started writing down what we talked about in my prayer times, and I made note of the small gifts and insights that God seemed to leave for me everywhere.

I still worked like crazy. I continued to network and to investigate any new possibility the Lord revealed because I never knew when this would be the one. But now I was reinvigorated because I was no longer trying to wrestle the answers out of God. Now the Lord and I were walking the path together.

Finally the right job did come. God opened a door into a great new career, and the Spirit was kind enough to tell me, in the quiet of my heart and through good guidance, “This is it.” But the mystery revealed in this verse was the bigger prize.

In any job search, you will face challenges, but God will minister to you in a thousand small ways, nourishing your soul with the Spirit’s presence. Whatever happens in your career, now or in the future, you can know that when you seek the Lord’s presence, you will also find joy to strengthen you on the journey.

One Small Step for Today

Discovering the joy of the Lord’s presence is not about hearing the dramatic voice in the moment of crisis. Involve God in the small, seemingly insignificant decisions of daily life, and give the Lord permission to take you outside of your I-must-find-the-answer thinking. The job search offers you countless opportunities to practice. Should you send the résumé or not, make the call or not, follow up or not? Ask. Start a conversation with God and see where it leads.

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We hope you have enjoyed this sampling from the 60 devotions in Aaron Basko's *Help Wanted: Devotions for Job Seekers*.

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Praise for *Help Wanted*

“Without sugarcoating the experience of being unemployed, Basko offers Scripture, stories, and small steps to encourage you along the journey as you anticipate what God has in store.”

—Deidra Riggs, Managing Editor for TheHighCalling.org

“The personal stories are alive and effective.... The guidance in One Small Step for Today challenges the reader to apply practical and necessary discipline.”

—Craig Simons, Busines Coach and Volunteer Leader at RUMC Job Networking, and Katherine Simons, Author of *Loving Your Neighbor: A Faith Community's Response to the Unemployment Crisis*

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—Nick Synko, Principal Partner, SynkoAssociates.com,
Founder, CareersThroughFaith.org

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