

How to Convince Your Stubborn Friends They Need God

Have you seen the film *The Artist*? It won the Oscar in 2012 for best picture.

It's the story of George Valentin, a silent-movie star whose career is sunk by the advent of "talkies" in 1930. Valentin goes from famous to forgotten in a matter of months. He descends into a deep depression, refuses the help of others and even attempts suicide.

America in 2013 is full of George Valentins.

Millions of men lost their jobs in the great recession. It's been dubbed the "he-cession" because almost 80 percent of the job cuts fell upon men. Male-dominated fields such as construction, finance and transportation shed millions of jobs. In 2011, for the first time in U.S. history, more women than men were gainfully employed. Joblessness is running nearly 50 percent among young men in some European countries.

Men are suffering. They're confused about their roles and their futures. What a perfect opportunity for the church to step forward and offer help.

Your church may want to launch a ministry for people who need jobs. Trinity Episcopal Parish in Princeton, N.J., has offered a JobSeekers meeting every Tuesday since 1982. It's billed as "an instruction and support group for people who are unemployed or changing careers." JobSeekers has ministered to more than 25,000 individuals in the past 30 years.

If you want to start a similar job seekers' ministry in your church, visit the Career Transition Ministries Network website.

Unemployed men also need friendship and spiritual encouragement. It's a great time to invite them to join a small men's group, because they have one thing that working men don't: lots of spare time. The bigger challenge is getting them to come!

Unemployed men tend to isolate themselves. They're ashamed not to be working. They don't want to socialize with other men because when guys get together, they tend to talk about their jobs.

Keeping this in mind, be gentle but persistent when inviting unemployed men to join a small group at your church. It may take a while, but many men eventually overcome their fears and end up happy members of small groups. But if an unemployed man joins your group, caution the other guys not to talk about work. Keep the small talk focused on things every guy is interested in: sports, hobbies, family and the like.

The Bible is full of stories of men who lost their positions in life. Joseph was jailed. David was exiled. Elijah fled for his life. Jonah was swallowed by a whale. Hosea's wife cheated on him. Paul was betrayed by his closest companions.

Help men see that their unemployment is not a punishment from God, but rather a normal part of life. Encourage them not only to ask God for a new job, but also to reveal His purpose for their lives.

It's often difficult to convince a man of his need for God when he's on top of the world. But when he reaches the end of his rope, he's often more willing to "humble himself under the mighty hand of God." We have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to help displaced men gain a bigger vision for their lives. Let's not waste it.

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