

The Joseph Project Stories

Mike Cline

As a 61-year-old former Wal-Mart Home Office management associate, I found myself suddenly unemployed after 26 years with Wal-Mart. A bit dazed, I thankfully encountered The Joseph Project, and my entire perspective about my life-situation began to change from confusion, anger, and despair to hope, encouragement, and effective planning for me and my family's future.

Linda Foster:

After 27 years working for the same company my job was eliminated at Wal-Mart. That was 22 months ago and now I'm glad to announce that I have a new job and am returning to work!

The first year was a challenge, a new experience that I had not faced in over 27 years. Then early in 2009 I was introduced to WorkMatters and The Joseph Project. What a difference this made in my life. I met new people that were facing the same challenges I was. The testimonials from people that had lost their jobs and then found their way back were inspirational. The seminars provided by Cameron Smith and Associates was very beneficial. I finally realized that God had a plan for me and learned to "let go, and let God" guide me.

I have recently landed a job at Arvest Bank in Rogers. It is such a blessing and the culture there is exactly what I wanted. I can't express my gratitude enough for all the support and fellowship I received through The Joseph Project and the many wonderful people I met there. My only regret is that I can't continue to come to the meetings. Thank you so much.

Scott Sloan:

TJP was such a great help to me, it gave me encouragement, help to keep me focused on the positives and strengthen my faith that God was in control.

Jim and the "48 days" class really inspired me to have hope and to look for something that gave me a sense of joy and meaning and not just a job. The weekly meetings were also so helpful in encouraging and strengthening my faith and hope in God and his control over my path. I may have made it without TJP but I know in my heart it may have taken longer and I may have done my will and not his.

Thanks to all of you and God bless. If I can help you and TJP in any way just let me know.

Lisa Norman:

I am so thrilled to finally be writing this email! I GOT A JOB!! Please forgive the general email for this initial introduction to my new job...however, there have been so many of you that have been so wonderful during this journey that I wanted to try and update everyone as soon as possible!

Jarrold Davis

The most empty and alone I have ever felt was the day I carried a cardboard box of personal belongings to my car. I had just been laid off from a company where I had worked for 13 years; almost instantly I went from being a corporate employee to a national statistic. I had no idea how I was going to explain this to my wife and kids. I didn't know what I was going to do for income or where to turn for guidance. Most of my peers were in the same situation.

A friend told me about a group meeting at a local church. I knew I had to start circulating resumes and getting my name out there, so I began attending. The group was The Joseph Project, a ministry of WorkMatters. As miserable as I sometimes felt during the week, I always looked forward to seeing everyone at WorkMatters. The leaders had at one time experienced what I was going through and offered great encouragement. The best part was just belonging to a group of people who shared my frustration, need for help, and never-ending hope that God could be trusted to get us through the storm. Above all, The Joseph Project made me feel that I was not alone.

After a few months of attending, I looked at the job listings on The Joseph Project website for the first time. I have spent many hours looking at job descriptions on other websites, but this one was unlike any other. It described a position for a person with integrity...experience in this field would be nice, but the priority was integrity. I had never seen a listing stress this before, so I contacted the company immediately. Amazingly, the gentleman hiring was Bob Cantrell, a huge supporter of WorkMatters. There is no doubt in my mind that this position is where God wants me to be at this point in my life.

It took me over six months to find a job, and at times I felt like I was at the lowest point in my life. My wife got me through the hardest times by saying, 'Life isn't about waiting for the storm to pass...life is about dancing in the rain.' The storm won't last forever, and without the rain, there can be no new life.

I am truly thankful for everyone at WorkMatters and the ministry of The Joseph Project for giving me something to lean on during my struggle. I will do everything I can going forward to repay the kindness I was shown in hopes of helping someone else.

Linda Keeling:

I really feel like I'm missing something from my week if I don't attend TJP each week. Interesting enough, Jerry (husband) told me once he was unemployed that he may go occasionally but not to expect it all the time. He was impressed after he went his first time. He said, "I figured it was going to be mostly "business" people" (meaning ex-Wal-Mart) and he really got something from it. Now, even he says on Monday night, "we need to get to bed so we can get up tomorrow"!

Having been unemployed for the first time in my life, I had no idea I would be so depressed (for lack of better word) not being able to find a job. Many thanks to you, David, and Sam because it has definitely brought a bright spot to our lives and gives us purpose for continuing on. I pray that I can continue to encourage others to attend even after I've gone back to work.

Chad Berkshire:

What I found at the Joseph Project meetings can be summed up in one word. "Support". I knew when I was laid off in February that I was not alone. I had seen the news on TV and online. But what I didn't know was how much it would mean to me to put some faces to the statistics. While H.R. was letting me go, they were also trying to give me advice. What they said over and over was to start networking with other people because you never know what opportunity may arise. I'm not a social person who likes to mix and mingle, but I'm also not a person who likes to be unemployed.

I noticed a small announcement for The Joseph Project meeting to be held at my church. The timing and location just seemed to be too much to ignore so I went to the meeting. I was amazed at how many people there were in attendance. We had great speakers that gave us great advice and access to resources that I otherwise would not have afforded. Cameron Smith and Associates were particularly generous that night with their time and talent. So I made up my mind that I would go see them later that week to try and get some job leads, refine my resume or anything else that might help me out of my unemployment situation.

While visiting CSA I noticed pamphlets advertising a local computer learning center. That led to available funds from my unemployment insurance, weeks of classes, and finally to a certification as an I.T. Technician. This enhancement to my resume has brought me new opportunities and interviews. The weekly Joseph Project meetings are also a good way to keep perspective of life and work. We learn about setting goals and learning lessons the right way, God's way. The meetings are a great source of encouragement. Thanks to The Joseph Project, I have stayed away from a personal pity party and kept a cool head during my job search.

Nancy Whitney:

God is good...I have accepted a job offer at Wal-Mart home office and began training this week. I owe a debt of gratitude to the Joseph Project. Weekly meetings in Bentonville/Rogers have given me hope, encouragement, and so much practical advice. Networking with other Christians and knowing you are not alone, definitely makes a difference!! I can't thank you all enough for your support and prayers!

I believe WorkMatters is a vital ministry to all believers in the workplace. I intend to spread the word to my friends and co-workers and stay in touch with my new friends at the Joseph Project. You all have been a joy to me. Thanks for all you do!

Wayne Story:

Over the last few months my attendance at the Joseph Project has helped me confirm the significant extremes of what I would refer to as two competing approaches when experiencing a loss of employment.

One touted by most of the vocational literature is a world view that explains the job hunt as a numbers game, probability, and/or luck while hopefully applying various intentional strategies using a combination of principally the internet, other media sources, and personal networking.

The other approach utilizes the same basic tools plus significant prayer support recognizing a biblical world view of the sovereignty of God in all things, including job search and placement. Certainly this process is not one of resignation and/or simply waiting for a phone call and offer. Rather it might be described as a biblically-based intentionality and challenge to explore all options presenting themselves akin to diligently turning over each rock discovered on a pathway toward developing a deeper spiritual experience in understanding the foundational truths about life. One of those rocks will have your name on it but each one is a learning experience that might even be valuable to another on the same walk.

The Joseph Project has allowed me to discover, establish, and receive immediate home-styled support for this latter process with diverse new friendships from like-minded individuals -- all of whom are sensitive to the needs of those in this search and desirous to provide encouragement, wisdom, networking contacts and formal resources to positively alter this unusual season of life. I look forward to each meeting expecting and receiving fresh insights from others who have walked a similar road of adversity.

Alan Jennings:

I received my invitation to the first Joseph Project meeting only a couple of days after being informed that I would be laid off from my job. The company was in financial trouble and hundreds of people were being let go. This was March of 2009, only half a year into the credit crisis that wrecked the financial sector in September of 2008 and initiated a nationwide recession. The talk on the street was that jobs would be scarce, and that more layoffs were looming. Amidst the gloom and doom talk of the time, I walked into a Joseph project meeting that was quite the contrary. In a room of people most affected by the recession, I found optimism, hope, and encouraging words. In this environment of shared hardship, the group supported each person unconditionally. Along with this support came counsel, teaching, and wisdom – from a group of people that had already been through the trials I was facing.

I can still remember with certain clarity one of the lessons taught in the first meeting: Get up every morning and dress in your business casual, be at your desk by 8:00am and begin your work, fill your calendar with beneficial tasks, including your job search, self improvement, bible study, volunteer work, professional development, prayer, resume work, networking, etc. – never give up on your day. I took this to heart, and applied this rule rigorously every day. Before long I was busier than I ever had been with a job. I was involved heavily in ministries, I have set up bible studies with several men seeking God, I was taking a host of internet-based training programs, and I was praying and studying God's word more than I had before. My outlook calendar was booked solid from 7:30am to 5:30pm Monday through Friday every day I was unemployed. Without the Joseph project, I am confident I would have gone the other way – sat at home, become more depressed, withdraw from the world, and weaken in spirit. Because of the wisdom of others that had made that mistake and learned from it, and the capacity of the ministry to place those people in front of us and teach, I was spared that fate.

After 3 months of searching, I never found a job. But with the help of the Joseph project, and the mentors in the ministry that showed us what can be done with initiative and hard work, I had the confidence to begin my own business. Today we are doing well, as God has seen fit to bless my efforts. After not finding a 'job' I began the consulting business which I own today, and which has prospered with God's help. I have great customers and I am booked solid for the foreseeable future. I am learning quite a lot and enjoy the work immensely – and yes, I am making more money than I did in my old job. More importantly, I have increased my involvement in the ministry, and have built new and fruitful relationships that will benefit me and others going forward. I consider myself better off than before I lost my job, and I find it amazing how God can use what we view as 'hardships', to provide his blessings.

Rhonda Houser:

In early 2009, the economy appeared to be plummeting. The news was saturated with stories of different area companies laying off workers. As a minority owner of a staffing company, I was gravely concerned as our organization experienced significant reduction in business week after week. Although the owners attempted to maintain a positive outlook, we also recognized that it was critical to be realistic about the situation and therefore began to cut expenses in all areas. As everyone in business knows, one of the highest expense areas is in personnel costs and so we examined those as well. Although it was a difficult pill to swallow, it became evident that the responsibilities assigned to me could be restructured among others. Therefore, the decision was made that although I would remain an owner, I would no longer be an employee of my company. My journey had begun.

A couple of weeks prior to the elimination of my position, I had heard about The Joseph Project and the services it would be providing. I felt led to contact David Roth and let him know that if there was a role in which I could support the mission, I'd be happy to assist. He responded by inviting me to the weekly meetings. I attended for a couple of weeks in a support role, and then became an active member; an individual who had lost her job and was seeking encouragement, support, and assistance from others. The Joseph Project was a life line for me. Each week I looked forward to the 6:30 am meeting. I found a group of caring individuals who completely understood the experience of being unemployed because we were all walking this same path. Although you might expect the meetings to be somewhat sober or solemn that was not the case at all. Each week we would enjoy fellowship, listen to an uplifting lesson one the leaders felt should be shared, and spent time encouraging one another to use this time to learn and grow in the promises God's Word has provided.

The knowledge that so many in The Joseph Project and others were praying for my situation gave me the confidence I needed to believe God had a plan. God provided my family and me the resources we needed to make ends meet. He provided the opportunity to attend a conference where I learned about a potential independent contract. He designed each circumstance so that I was in the right place at the right time to be considered for a position. I feel incredibly blessed to now have a job where I can use my gifts and talents to bless others.

The Joseph Project was an incredible blessing to my life. I am grateful to the Work Matters team for listening to the still, small voice that led them to create The Joseph Project. I'm grateful for the Bible that tells us that there will be times when we may have to go thru difficulties, but that God is still with us. I'm grateful for my Christian brothers and sisters who lifted me up in prayer. I'm grateful to be a blessed child of God and to know just like every believer in Christ, I'm always in the safety of the palm of His hand.