



**LEADERSHIP
EDGE INC.**

The Role is Not the Rewardⁱ

by John Hawkins

. . . when the blessed Lord grants one a role to play, one must perform it faithfully, but never grasp it. For the Lord also takes away. The role is not the reward. The Lord is the Reward. We must remember that our role is not our reward. Jesus is our reward. Roles will begin and they will end. And the only way for us to end well is if in our heart Jesus has increased and we have decreased.

— Jon Bloom

Use me then, my Savior, for whatever purposes and in whatever way you may require. Here is my poor heart, an empty vessel; fill it with your grace. — Dwight L Moody

For not from the east or from the west and not from the wilderness comes lifting up, but it is God who executes judgment, putting down one and lifting up another. — Psalm 75:6-7 (ESV)

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Philippians 2:5-11 (ESV)

Last week, by God's grace, I reached my 65th birthday. One of the great things that happened during this 65th year was that I stepped down from serving as the president of a nonprofit organization that others and I began 25 years ago. My friend Todd Melby became president. I had dreamt and prayed for nearly 10 years that by the time or before I reached 65 God would bring someone else to serve as president and that I would then move into an *at large* Founder role.

Many friends have asked me during this transition if it's been hard for me. I've pondered that question and can't come up with one thing that has been hard about it. God brought a godly, humble and gifted leader to be the next president. I want Todd to be the president, I don't want to be the president, and I don't want him to keep everything the same as it was when I led the organization. I trust his judgment and the judgment of the board of directors. It's not *my* organization. It's God's organization, and I've had the privilege to play the role of president and now the role of founder and non-voting director who reports to the president.

In this season I've reflected on how easy it is, especially for men, to tie our identity and worth to our role. There are many cultural reinforcements to this misguided self-understanding. I think that Jon Bloom addresses this exactly right in his quote given above. Here are the points I've taken from Bloom and the Scripture passages given above.

1. **The roles we play are granted us from God.** He puts down one and lifts up another (Psalm 75:7). We have no good thing that we didn't receive from God (1 Corinthians 4:7).
2. **We must perform our roles faithfully.** This involves dependence upon Him in performing the role, obedience to Him in performing the role and the ultimate goal being not to



establish my identity or worth but to bring honor and glory to Him (*He must increase, I must decrease* John 3:30).

3. **The role is not the reward. The Lord is the reward.** The role and its associated status isn't the core reward that God has for us. He Himself is the reward. Our challenge is that because of the twisted state and motivations of our heart, we too often deem Him as not that great of a reward, especially compared to the praise and regard of others.
4. **As in all things, Christ is our example to follow in understanding *our role*.** He did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped. He emptied himself. He took the form (role) of a servant. He was born in the likeness of man. He became obedient to the point of death. He gave up everything. He held on to nothing except for the assurance that in his giving up everything, He'd thereby bring honor and glory to His Father. Hebrews 12:2 says *that Christ for the joy that was set before him endured the cross*. Surely that joy was the joy of knowing that He'd honored His Father by showing the world that He loves the Father and does exactly as He commands (John 14:31).

Transitioning to a lesser role in Leadership Edge is a joy to me. It's an answer to prayer. But what about those other times when God calls me to a role that I don't see as a joy, as an answer to prayer? What then? May my prayer then be that of Dwight L Moody — *Use me then, my Savior, for whatever purposes and in whatever way you may require. Here is my poor heart, an empty vessel; fill it with your grace.*

Take it to the Lord

1. Read through this meditation again, asking God to open your eyes, mind, heart and soul to His message for you today.
2. As He speaks to you, listen. Ask Him to guide you as to what you should do with what He says and for the grace to do so.
3. End your time with some form of worship—prayer, praise, thanksgiving or surrender.

ⁱ From *Longings Toward a God-Centered Life: Meditations on Great Thoughts and Passages* by John Hawkins. The purpose of publishing these meditations is to share perspectives for leaders and followers on biblical understanding for daily living. The meditations are derived from John's reflections on quotes from Christian leaders and from God's Word.