

New Man Story

John Roberts — Your Plan May Not Be God's

John Roberts, III is President & CEO of J.B. Hunt, a position he has held since 2011. J.B. Hunt is a leading transportation & logistics company employing 24,000 people.

Like many bright and aggressive superstars who achieve early recognition and increasing levels of responsibility and leadership in their companies, John started to define himself at the age of 32 by his success in J.B. Hunt. He was riding high and taking credit for the success of his division. That all works well until a crack forms in the foundation of the business and things start to go south. In 2001, that's exactly what happened. The market changed and the division John was leading and growing at 40% yearly rates hit a wall and started to decline at 40% rates as quickly as they had risen.

What do you do when your confidence and identity are based on your success and your success is compromised? In John's case, he decided he would look for a position at another company. He shared his decision with his wife on a drive from Arkansas to Texas. Her response was great—"I think that's a fine idea. Most people don't stay in the same company their whole career anyway. So just as soon as you get that business fixed, we can move on and you'll have my support then." Not exactly the response John was expecting. He was ready to go. She was of the opinion that you don't quit in the middle of a storm. Otherwise you live the rest of your life never knowing the difference you might have made. That was wisdom being spoken into John's life by his wife.

This inflection point caused John to start thinking about where his confidence and priorities were. He knew about God, but he didn't have a personal relationship with Him at that time. To quote John, "It's all good when it's all good, but what happens when it's not all good? Where do you lean? Where do you find peace and direction? I didn't really have it."

Shortly thereafter, John's faith turning point came in a hotel room in Las Vegas during a conference. Not knowing what to do about the business, not being given permission by his wife to quit, and not having the answers...he turned to God. It was then that he learned, in conversation with Him, that he couldn't take the credit for the business' successes, nor could he take the blame for its failures. He came to understand that if he gave God control of his career, there would continue to be successes and failures but that he would no longer be in control of those. He would be following God, not making his own way. He would be a part of a much bigger idea and plan for his life—God's plan.

From then on, and to this day, John doesn't take the credit when the business does well nor does he lose heart when it does poorly. He knows his role is to run the business with integrity, give God the reins and do the best that he can. That day in Las Vegas, John found the answers to the questions he was asking.

Discussion Questions

1. What do you mainly count on these days? Your talents and abilities, or God's leading?
2. Have you ever run from a problem and regretted that you didn't stay to sort it out?
3. Where do you turn, and what do you do when you don't have answers to life's problems?

Click below to watch a 9 minute clip of John's MGF talk

<https://vimeo.com/424348046>