

LETTERS FROM GRANDPA

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Dearest grandchild,

Our last letter encouraged fairness to everyone, but especially those who are rich. Today's letter will deal with a very rich man named Robert Gilmour LeTourneau (November 30, 1888 – June 1, 1969). It was my privilege to interview his late son, Roy LeTourneau over radio station KOBC in Joplin, Mo. At that time Roy was promoting the 20/20 project involving evangelism in Latin America. There are 20 Latin American countries and Roy was helping church in each of their 20 capitals. His godly father, R.G., was born in Richford, Vermont and became rich and famous for inventing earthmoving machinery. His genius actually helped win World War II as his companies produced nearly 70 percent of all the earthmoving equipment used during the war. Even though he dropped out of school at the age of 14 he still had nearly 300 patents to his credit. Among many other of his accomplishments, he is famous for giving away 90% of his income.

In 1919 he felt the need to do more for God and sought counsel from his pastor. He assumed that God would call him to be a pastor or missionary. After a time of deep prayer, Pastor Duvol shocked the young businessman with words that guided him the rest of his life. The pastor said: "God needs businessmen too". This challenge resonated with LeTourneau, and he immediately considered himself as a business partner with God. His life verse was Matthew 6:33: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you."

LeTourneau is quoted in the July 1966 issue of Popular Mechanics as saying: *"By accepting God as your partner, no limit can be placed on what can be achieved. When you go into partnership with God, you've got a partner closer and more active than any human partner you can ever get. He participates freely in everything you let Him do, and when you start putting on airs and thinking your doing it with your own head of steam, He can set you down quicker and harder than a thunderbolt".* The first words in the Bible are: "In the beginning God created . . ." With God as his partner, no wonder R. G. LeTourneau was so creative.

One creative idea God gave LeTourneau was the electric wheel. He invested so heavily in this revolutionary concept that it drove him to the brink of bankruptcy. Among other outstanding debts was an unpaid electric bill of \$100,000. His lawyers and accountants recommended that he file for bankruptcy. Instead, he knelt down in his office, asked God for guidance. Then he got up and went to work. Soon after the bugs were worked out in the electric wheel it became the power source for all of his equipment. Further, this concept revolutionized the entire earthmoving industry. When asked to explain the remarkable recovery of his business, he said: "The Lord chooses the weak to confound the mighty".

Popular Mechanics also quoted him as saying: *"I have a scraper that will pick up 300 tons of dirt and move it at 20 mph, but that's nothing. I'm working on a conveyer system that will move 100 tons a minute. Think of it. 500 foot sections, each powered with electric wheels that are independent of the others. A digger in the front section just chewing up the earth and passing it on, and the rear section dumping it where you wish. I'm just itching to build a shovel with a 25 yard*

dipper that will roll across dry land or swim rivers. The idea being that such a machine can reclaim millions of acres of rich land that are now nothing but marsh or tidal flats”.

LeTourneaus shared his passion for God by helping others. Chapel services and paid chaplains were an integral part of his companies. In 1934 he started the LeTourneau Christian Center in Rushville, N.Y. In 1937 he bought camp Bethel at Winona Lake, Indiana to be an evangelistic and recreational center. In 1946 he purchased an abandoned military hospital and 156 acres at Longview, Texas, and turned it into a private Christian training facility. It is now known as LeTourneau University. In 1953, LeTourneau began a development project in the country of Liberia, West Africa, and in 1954, a colonization project with similar projects in Peru, South America. As always, each endeavor was to honor his partnership with God. By 1959, even after donating \$10 Million to Christian and educational endeavors, the LeTourneau Foundation was still worth around \$40 Million. This, of course, is but the tip of the iceberg involving the influence of R. G. LeTourneau. His is a lasting legacy that continues to influence millions all over the world.

He certainly has influenced me, perhaps he will influence you too!

I love you,

Grandpa Boyce