

LETTERS FROM GRANDPA

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Dearest grandchild,

Today's letter will deal with the African country of Rwanda. Not too long ago Rwanda was famous for genocide. Under the U.N. "one man one vote" election the Hutu's won a resounding victory over the Tutsis as they composed 84% of the population. When their Hutu president (Habyarimana) died in a plane shot down by a terrorist rocket, the Hutus went on another killing spree. This new round of killing began April 6, 1994. 10 Belgian peace keepers were among the first victims. Advised by the U.N. to turn over their weapons and not resist, the unarmed soldiers were quickly hacked to pieces with machetes. This set the stage for a bloodbath beyond journalism's reach. If you had money you could die quickly with a bullet in the brain. If you had no money you were hacked to death for free. After two days the rivers were blocked with thousands of bodies and parts of Lake Victoria remained polluted for many years. 36,000 victims were buried in one mass grave. In previous wars church buildings were recognized as a safe haven, but not this time. This bizarre slaughter was not the result of a few crazed individuals but the madness infected "ordinary" people from every walk of life. Like Mao's Red Guard and Pol Pot's Khmer Rouge many of the killers were young people in their teens. A million people were slaughtered in only 100 days.

Now let us fast forward to 2004 and Pastor Rick Warren. Warren is famous for his best selling book *The Purpose Driven Life*. As of 2019 it had sold 32 million copies in 85 languages. Warren started the Saddleback Church in Southern California which now has an average attendance of 20,000 each week. His financial success as an author led him in 2005 to return to the church all the money they had paid him for 25 years of service. Now he continues to work as pastor without a salary and describes himself as a "reverse tither". That is, he lives on 10% and gives away 90%.

In 2004 Warren was contacted by Rwandan President Paul Kagame. Kagame explaining that he had read *The Purpose Driven Life*, and wanted Warren and his team to come to Africa and help Rwanda become the first "purpose driven nation." Since that time thousands of volunteers from Saddleback have journeyed to Rwanda to help make a difference. Wikipedia notes: "By the end of 2010, Saddleback members have gone to every nation around the world to make a difference through the PEACE Plan. (P-Plant churches and promote reconciliation. E – Equip servant leaders. A – Assist the poor. C – Care for the sick. E – Educate the next generation) In each country, the members partnered with local churches to meet the needs of the community. In 2013, Saddleback Church launched its first international sites through the PEACE Plan: Hong Kong, Berlin, Buenos Aires, and Manila (launched in early 2014).

Newsmax reported on July 2, 2019: "*Under Kagame's leadership, the nation has undergone a process of reconciliation and is now considered one of the safest countries in Africa. More than 1 million Rwandans have come out of poverty and the World Bank listed Rwanda as "among the ten most improved economies in 2013. . .You may be thinking, 'Why has Rwanda grown and developed and become such a place of prosperity and safety so fast and in such a short amount of time?' " Warren said. "I mean it's gone from Third World to First World in a generation. Let me give you the reasons in my opinion. No. 1, God has chosen to bless Rwanda because the Rwandans chose to forgive."*

On July 9, 2019 all 54 nations in Africa were invited to Rwanda to discuss purpose driven leadership. This was the fifth such annual meeting. They are expecting 1,800 to attend including 300

government officials, 300 business leaders, and 1,200 church leaders. Warren sees progress like a three legged stool involving the church, the government, and business. Every leg, of course, is important.

Progress has not been easy as thousands of Hutus fled to neighboring countries to avoid prosecution. Many of these rebels still seek to interfere and destroy the present government in Rwanda.

The late Paul Harvey said: "It is windy at the top". Nobody bothers to attack the lukewarm and mediocre. Since Warren has become so famous he has been constantly attacked and criticized. I'm sure Pastor Warren has made many mistakes. One mistake he has not made, however, is burying his talent in the ground and doing nothing. Remember! It was the false prophets that everyone spoke well of (Lk. 6:26). Please pray for Pastor Rick and the brethren at Saddleback that God will give them guidance and energy as they seek to lead people to Jesus and to make the world a better place in which to live.

I love you.

Grandpa Boyce