

## R. G. LeTOURNEAU

Robert Gilmour LeTourneau (November 30, 1888 – June 1, 1969), was born in Richford, Vermont. He was a prolific inventor of earthmoving machinery. His machines represented nearly 70 percent of the earthmoving equipment and engineering vehicles used during World War II. He had nearly 300 patents. Interestingly, he dropped out of school at the age of 14. Among many other accomplishments, he is famous for giving away 90% and living on the rest.

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 also 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 kneeled down in his office, asked God for guidance, and went to work. Soon after the bugs were worked out and the electric wheel became the power source for all of his equipment. Further, the earthmoving industry itself was revolutionized. 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"*.

The LeTourneaus shared the passion of God for helping others. Chapel services and paid chaplains were an integral part of their companies. In 1934 they started the LeTourneau Christian Center in Rushville, N.Y.I. In 1937 they bought camp Bethel at Winona Lake, Indiana as an evangelistic and recreational center. In 1946 they purchased the abandoned military hospital and 156 acres in 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 project in Peru, South America. As always, each endeavor was to honor their 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.

Perhaps it will influence you and me too!

