

## **“America Needs More Citizens Like Warrick Dunn”**

### **I Peter 2:11-17**

Preached by Dr. Robert F. Browning, Pastor  
Smoke Rise Baptist Church  
Stone Mountain, Georgia  
July 3, 2005

Over five hundred athletes were considered for Sporting News’ “Good Guy” Award. This award is given to show that not all professional athletes are undisciplined and selfish. Included on the list were teammates Keith Brooking and Allen Rossum, along with Atlanta Braves’ players John Smoltz, Mike Hampton and Brian Jordan. Atlanta Falcon running back, Warrick Dunn, however, was at the top of the list.

The reason he was selected for the award this year was because of his compassion and generosity. One of his projects is called “Home for the Holidays.” This program assists single mothers in owning their first homes by helping them with down payments and furnishings. Each recipient is given five thousand dollars for the down payment and every home is filled with twenty-five thousand dollars worth of furniture, appliances, draperies and accessories, including a loaded pantry. He has assisted fifty-two mothers and one hundred thirty-five children in his hometown of Baton Rouge as well as Tampa and Atlanta.

Dunn grew up in a single parent home with five siblings and a mother that made \$36,000 a year as a police officer. He knows how hard it is to make ends meet as a single parent and wants to help as many as possible. His mother never owned a home and his family moved often from one rented house or apartment to another in the most dangerous parts of Baton Rouge. In 1993, when Dunn was only eighteen years old, his mother was shot and killed by someone robbing a local store.

“I did not grow up with many material things, but I was surrounded by the love of family, friends and coaches. My mother worked several overtime hours to put food on the table and a roof over our heads. Although we did not have much, my mother taught me how to give of myself and to be generous with those in need.”

**This spirit of humility, gratitude and generosity should characterize every Christian.** Can you imagine the impact we would have upon the world if it did? We would fulfill Peter’s wish when he wrote, “Live such **good lives** among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and **glorify God** on the day He visits” I Peter 2:12.

Verall Robinson is one of the “Home for the Holidays” recipients. “I love Warrick Dunn,” she said when interviewed, “he is doing the Lord’s work.” She and many others see God’s generous nature in Dunn’s benevolent deeds. They praise Him for providing Dunn with the resources, opportunities and desire to help others.

The word “good” in I Peter 2:11 means lovely, attractive or winsome. It is a lifestyle that causes others to notice and emulate. The Sporting News noticed Dunn’s generosity, didn’t they? I suspect others will, too, and follow his lead.

I think it would be good if we all followed his lead. Our lives would be more attractive, our faith more inviting and our country a better place if believers were known for their humility, gratitude and generosity. This was Peter’s message to his readers in this passage that focused upon civic responsibilities. His greatest interest was not in the

type of government under which they lived but their Christian witness among neighbors. He wanted them to live graciously in an ungracious world.

Henri Nouwen was a Catholic priest, renowned writer and busy lecturer. He wrote forty books that were published in twenty-two languages. The Wounded Healer is one of my favorites. He taught at the University of Notre Dame and the Divinity Schools at Yale and Harvard.

To maintain his spiritual center, he volunteered in a Canadian monastery that cared for severely handicapped persons. One day a reporter came looking for Nouwen in the monastery because he wanted to write an article about him. He was told he would find Nouwen in the third room down the hallway. Expecting to walk into an office, he walked into a public restroom. He knew there had to be a mistake so he asked the janitor that was cleaning the toilets where he would find Henri Nouwen. The man looked up and said, "You've found him."

This kind of genuine humility attracts people. It also inspires them to be more sensitive, compassionate and generous.

Bob Thompson is a remarkable man. He spent his life building an asphalt company in Michigan. It was hard work, consisting of fourteen-hour days, six days a week. He began with a few employees and over the years built the company into the largest road paving company in the Midwest. In 1999, at the age of seventy-two, he retired. He sold his company for several million dollars.

It was what he did next that shocked a nation. He gave one hundred twenty-eight million dollars of the purchase price back to the 550 employees in the company. Each employee received \$2,000 for every year of employment and eighty people that had been with him from almost the beginning received one million dollars each.

When his generosity became news, reporters rushed to his humble ranch-style house that he bought when he first got married. What a contrast Thompson's generosity was to CEO's that were taking million dollar bonuses from companies that were in financial trouble, laying people off or withholding retirement pay. When asked why he was doing this, Thompson's answer was simple. "It brings me joy."

You don't have to be wealthy, athletic, famous or own a business to be generous. You just have to be humble and grateful. And when you are, your life will be so attractive, lovely and winsome that others will take notice and follow, for goodness is highly contagious.

Ask Warrick Dunn. Because of his influence, three NFL players have started programs similar to his helping single parents and their families. Our country needs more citizens like these. Will you be one?