

Gun Used in Suicide of Rick Warren's Son Sold Illegally

The gun that the 27-year-old son of popular evangelical pastor **Rick Warren** used to kill himself was sold to him illegally, with its serial number removed, California authorities said on Friday.

Orange County Sheriff's detectives were investigating Matthew Warren's purchase of the firearm, which was recovered at the scene, and could seek charges against the seller, sheriff's spokesman Jim Amormino said.

"We do have a gun that we are investigating but we still have some investigation to do," Amormino said.

"The gun does have the serial numbers scratched off," he said. "We're going to try to determine who the previous owner is, but because of the condition of the weapon, with its serial numbers missing, that may be difficult."

Matthew Warren was found dead of a self-inflicted gunshot wound at his home in Mission Viejo, California, last week after what his parents have described as a lifelong struggle with depression and mental illness.

Rick Warren, pastor of the Orange County-based Saddleback Valley Community Church and author of the best-selling book "The Purpose-Driven Life," has said that his son purchased the weapon online.

"Someone on the Internet sold Matthew an unregistered gun. I Pray he seeks God's forgiveness. I forgive him," Rick Warren tweeted on Thursday afternoon. He made a similar post on his Facebook page.

In a separate tweet, he added: "If you forgive men when they

sin against you, your Heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you don't ..."

Amormino said he could not confirm that the gun had been purchased on the Internet, citing the ongoing investigation. He also declined to describe the weapon. But he said the transaction was clearly illegal.

"In no case is it legal to possess or sell a weapon with a serial number that has been scratched out," he said, adding that other laws may have been violated as well.

The high-profile suicide of Warren's son with an unregistered firearm comes as members of Congress debate President Barack Obama's package of gun-control proposals, prompted by the massacre of 20 children and six adults at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, four months ago.

Rick Warren delivered an invocation at Obama's first inauguration in January 2009.

Saddleback, one of the largest evangelical churches in the United States, is affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention. About 20,000 people attend weekly services at the main campus in Lake Forest and seven other churches throughout Southern California.

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