

# AFRICA WEST AREA LOCAL PAGES

## AREA PRESIDENCY MESSAGES

### How Does One Rob God in Tithing and Offerings?

By Elder Edward Dube

Of the Seventy

A number of years ago, while working in our garden with a helper, he shared with me a tithing experience he had with his bishop. Brother Silas Dickson worked for the Church as a custodian in one of our chapels. He related to me how he had responded to an invitation by his bishop to go into his office.

Bishop Stanley asked Silas, “Brother Dickson, when are you going to be a full-tithe payer?” Silas responded, “Bishop, what do you mean by that? Each month I hand you my tithing envelope.” Of which the bishop responded, “Oh yes you do, but that is just your contribution, eh, part-tithe. My question is: when are you going to be a full-tithe payer?” Upon which Silas reminded the bishop that he pays tithing every month without fail and asked how the bishop could refer to him as a part-tithe payer. The bishop then asked Silas how much he was paid and calculated what 10 percent of his salary was. Silas jumped out of his chair and

said that if he paid that much each month there was no way he would survive. He went on to explain to the bishop about the situation with his immediate family, the monthly rentals, children’s tuition, the extended family, and all other expenses.

Silas said to me that the bishop just sat quietly listening to him. After he had finished with his list of excuses, the bishop said to him, “Silas, I invite you to be a full-tithe payer. If paying your tithing means that you cannot pay or meet all those expenses we discussed, just pay your tithing anyway. If after paying your tithing, you encounter some challenges, come and see me.”

Silas related his experience, “Ever since the counsel from my bishop, I have been a faithful tithe payer. My family and I have been alright. Sometimes we don’t have much to eat, but we have enough. More than anything, my trust in the Lord has been strengthened. I have proven my Lord and I know that the Lord will never let me down.” I asked him, “So did you



Elder Dube

go back to the bishop?” “No,” he said. Silas explained that there was no need to go back; instead the bishop called him to his office and asked how things were going. He told the bishop that he was doing well and that he had since reorganized his time so well that he now had extra time to do extra work in many more homes to earn extra income.

Silas then said to me, “That is why I am here; you recall I asked you if I could come and help with your garden for a reasonable charge?” Actually, this was true, Silas had asked to help in the garden for few hours each Saturday, and I noticed that he was also doing the same in other homes at different times.

Brother Silas Dickson was robbing the Lord and he did not even know it. When he realized this, he changed and felt the joy of living the principle of tithing and enjoying the promised blessings. Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught, “Tithing is a test of faith with eternal blessings. . . . Tithing develops



and tests our faith. By sacrificing to the Lord what we may think we need or want for ourselves, we learn to rely on Him.”<sup>1</sup>

Silas needed to know that contributing to the Lord what was convenient to him was not the necessary sacrifice which claims the eternal blessings. He needed to know too that *test* meant to take that leap of faith without

knowing what lies ahead. Above all Silas needed to know this great counsel from President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008): Tithing “is not so much a matter of money as it is a matter of faith.”<sup>2</sup>

The Savior set the pattern by His own teachings. Reinforcing what the Father taught to Malachi, the Savior defines how tithing serves as a sanctification not only in preparing us for ordinances, but also in preparing us to claim, “all that [His] Father hath” (D&C 84:38).

The Savior’s teachings in 3 Nephi truly help us understand that tithing has a greater significance than just the payment of it: “And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness” (3 Nephi 24:3). The Lord then expresses His concerns that we have “gone away from [His] ordinances” (3 Nephi 24:7). Our loving Savior’s pleading invitation inherent in tithing is that it be a truly spiritual experience, an invitation to sanctify ourselves and purify our hearts as we overcome selfish desires. “Return unto me and I will return unto you, saith the Lord of Hosts. But ye say: wherein shall we return? Will a man rob God? Yet ye have

robbed me. But ye say: wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings” (3 Nephi 24:7–8). Elder M. Russell Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles counseled: “Pay your tithing. The Lord said that He’ll provide, He’ll make the way, and that was the case with [our family].”<sup>3</sup>

I reflect on 30 years ago, sitting with two missionaries, Elders Russell Griffiths and James Hall, looking directly into my eyes as they extended an invitation which continues to be a source of blessing in my life up to this day: “Eddie, will you pay tithing at the end of this month and for the rest of your life?” The law of tithing and the blessings of being a full-tithe payer are immeasurable. Indeed, my wife, Naume, and I will always be indebted to these two missionaries who had prepared themselves so well to be able to invite the Spirit into our discussion which helped me change and embrace this principle in a way which added value in our early marriage as we struggled with meager income. The events and experiences which have occurred in a very miraculous way in our lives through tithing are too sacred to mention.

### **Embrace This Invitation**

I invite you to take a serious look inside yourself. I hope

you are a full-tithe payer; I hope you are not robbing God by not paying your full tithes. If you have not yet started, I urge you to begin. When you do, you will realize what it means to be a covenant person, to keep the vision of eternity continually in your mind and the value of it in your heart. You will realize what Silas realized through the inspired counsel from his bishop. You will realize and experience what the ancient and living prophets have experienced.

Elder Dale G. Renlund of the Seventy quotes some prophetic words he heard from President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counselor in the First Presidency: “Our members, wherever they may live, will only walk out of poverty and overcome their economic challenges when they pay their tithes.”<sup>4</sup> With all my heart, I plead with you my dear brothers and sisters, to live honestly with the Lord in the payment of tithes and offerings.

I humbly extend this invitation,

which was extended to me 30 years ago, with a promise that the Lord will always honor His promises to His faithful children. Will you pay an honest tithe this month and for the rest of your lives? ■

#### NOTES

1. Robert D. Hales, “Tithing: A Test of Faith with Eternal Blessings,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Nov. 2002, 26, 27.
2. Gordon B. Hinckley, “The Sacred Law of Tithing,” *Ensign*, Dec. 1989, 4.
3. Russell M. Ballard, “Preparing for the Future,” *Ensign or Liahona*, Sept. 2011, 28.
4. Dale G. Renlund, “Walk Out of Poverty and Change Your Economic Circumstance,” Africa Southeast website, May 21, 2014.

## OUR HERITAGE

# The Lord Provided a Way—Eight Liberian Missionaries Flee War-Torn Nation

By Sister Elizabeth Maki

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was still in its infancy in Liberia when civil war erupted in the West African nation, threatening members and branches and devastating an entire country.

When the war broke out in late 1989, eight native Liberian missionaries were serving in the country. By July 1990 conditions were so bad that those missionaries were shuttered inside their homes, unable to preach the gospel and forced to risk possible death just to meet with members. There was little food to eat, and it was difficult and very costly to obtain fuel for cars.

With their work grinding nearly to a complete

halt, Elders Marcus Menti and Joseph Myers, zone leaders in Monrovia, determined to go wherever they had to in order to complete their missions and serve as they had been called to do. That meant leaving Liberia, so together with the four other missionaries serving in Monrovia—Taylor Selli, Joseph Forkpah, Roverto Chanipo, and Dave Gonquoi—they devised a plan. With the help of Philip Abubakar, a counselor in the local branch presidency and the missionaries’ driver, the elders planned to travel north to Sierra Leone, cross the border, then continue on to Freetown, where their mission presidency—not native Liberians—had already been compelled to flee.

With gasoline scarce and dozens of checkpoints between Monrovia and the border, the plan seemed like a long shot.

“Our driver himself was not really convinced we would make it,” Menti remembers. “He almost at the time said, ‘We can’t make it.’ We encouraged and soften his heart over and over again, and he finally realized that we were missionaries and that we were inspired to do what we had prayed and fasted about. We again recited 1 Nephi 3:7 and were convinced afterwards that we could make our journey.”

Before they could leave, however, there was a crucial order of business to attend to: Find and bring in the last set of elders in Liberia, Elders John Gaye and Prince Nyanforh, who were serving just outside Monrovia, in Paynesville.

### **Delivered from Death**

The Liberian Civil War that erupted in late 1989 was fueled by a desire to oust a president whose preferential treatment of his own tribe, the Krahn, had fueled ethnic tensions and prompted unrest in the country. The rebels thus targeted members of

the Krahn tribe and regularly killed civilians belonging to that group.

For Elder John Gaye, a Krahn, the threat was a very real one. He and Nyanforh were trapped in their home for some time when rebels descended on Paynesville, and Gaye didn’t dare leave, instead coaxing Nyanforh out to find food.

“They were killing people, so I asked him, I said, ‘When I get out there and I die, then you will let the ward know that this missionary died for this cause,’” Nyanforh later said. He managed to get the missionaries some sustenance and return home safely—but only just.

“I told him that I would not go out there again because they killed two or three men, and I was afraid to go out and die,” Nyanforh said. “Rebels were walking around, and people were in doom.”

After several days the missionaries’ neighbors planned their exodus. They called for the elders to join them, and Gaye and Nyanforh did. But as the group was making its way out of the area, they were apprehended by the rebels.

“They came interrogating us—to find out where we were from,” Nyanforh said.

Gaye remembered that the rebels appeared “as fierce as famished wolves” as they interrogated each person to determine their ethnic origin and other information. But before they made it to the missionaries, darkness had fallen and the rebels decided to wait until daylight to continue their investigation.

“All night long I had been in communion with my Heavenly Father,” Gaye later wrote. “Though I was in an inextricable plight, I was confident of the Lord’s help.”

When morning came, the soldiers resumed their questioning. With just one more person to question before it would be Gaye’s turn, the missionary remembered he “nodded his head and began to imagine paradise.”



With his companion urging him to “trust God,” Gaye waited for his fate. But before he was questioned, a familiar face arrived.

“It was a Saint who the Lord sent to rescue me and my companion,” Gaye remembered. “He was a member of the Church and knew that I was one of those who had been apprehended, but he concealed my identity to his colleagues.”

Nyanforh said the soldier was a clerk in their branch and recognized the missionaries. The LDS member told the soldiers that the men were brethren in his church, and without further question, the missionaries were released.

The elders were taken to a refugee camp 13 miles from Monrovia, and it was during their brief stay there that the other missionaries in Monrovia were planning their escape. The elders sent someone in search of Gaye and Nyanforh, but by the time the searchers made it to Paynesville, the missionaries were already gone.

### **Fleeing Monrovia**

The six missionaries and their driver began searching for gasoline to make their journey and eventually traded half a bag of rice for four gallons (15 L) of gasoline—all the while knowing it would not be sufficient for the 370-mile (595 km) journey on bad roads.

On July 15, 1990, the seven men prepared for their journey. They held a sacrament meeting first thing in the morning, then planned to leave for Freetown. But small delays kept pushing back the start of their journey.

It was after noon before they made it to the mission home to inform their acting mission president of their plans and bid farewell, and it was 2:00 p.m. before they left the mission home for Freetown. The timing turned out to be fortuitous.

“As soon as we were on our way down from the upstairs at the mission home, we met our two missing elders on the steps,” Abubakar remembered.

After a week in the refugee camp, Gaye and Nyanforh—after many days of fasting and prayer—had felt prompted that morning to leave for Monrovia. After eight hours on foot, they arrived at the mission home just in time to join their fellow missionaries in their escape to Sierra Leone.

With nothing but a five-seat Toyota Corolla—which Abubakar had preserved from theft by removing the wheels and battery during the fighting—the eight missionaries and their driver set off on their journey. With the addition of the four gallons of gasoline they had bargained for, the tank held a total of five and a half gallons (21 L) as they began their trip.

Menti recalled that most everyone—including their acting mission president—expressed reservations about the missionaries setting off with so little fuel and such dismal prospects of getting more along the way.

“Some said we would end up pushing the car many miles toward the border,” he wrote. “We did acknowledge their concerns and quoted 1 Nephi 3:7, and all of them were reasonable.”

It was less than 100 miles (160 km) to the border, but with nine adult men in a small sedan and more than 50 checkpoints at which they would be stopped along the way, the odds were solidly against them. However, they set off believing that “God [would] provide for His saints.”

“En route,” Menti recalled, “Brother Philip, our driver, observed with amazement the gas gauge making no change at all after having travelled 14–18 miles (21–29 km). He was very much astonished. We were not, for we knew the Lord would provide a way.”

The missionaries made it to Sierra Leone that evening with gasoline to spare, and were able to

buy five more gallons at the border at the much-reduced price of \$25 (Liberian; about \$.30 USD) per gallon; the going rate then was \$85 (Liberian; about \$1 USD) per gallon, when any gasoline could be found.

When they arrived at the border, the immigration checkpoint had already shut down for the night, so the missionaries spent the night taking turns sleeping in the car. The following morning, yet another obstacle arose.

Of the nine men in the car, only three had passports. Of the remaining six, only two had national ID cards that would enable them to cross the border. After initially being told they would have to return to the embassy in Monrovia, they were later called in and told that the immigration officers would help them because they were missionaries.

Once across the border, the journey in some ways became more difficult, as the roads in Sierra Leone were far inferior to those in Liberia. At one checkpoint the men were told that the next 14 miles (23 km) of road were so bad that many cars had wrecked and were stranded along the way. At some points there were gaps in the road that the car had to be pushed across or lifted over.

"In some places where the road was very bad, I would order the elders to get down and run after me while I drove through the rough part of the road," Abubakar wrote. "I was very careful with the exhaust pipe and the tires."

Menti recalled having to run after the car for stretches as long as two miles (3 km). Along the way they passed several cars stuck on the road, including several models much more expensive than their Toyota. Thanks to Abubakar's care, the missionaries made it through without getting stuck. Later, as the faster, less-loaded cars freed themselves and passed the elders, they expressed their amazement.

"When the road got smoother later, they passed by us at a certain checkpoint," Menti said. "We think they were amazed to see a Toyota sedan going through the bad roads when the Mercedes could not. They then told us, 'You have a good driver,' and they clapped for him."

Late that night, after 34 hours on the road, the eight missionaries and Abubakar arrived at the home of mission president, Miles Cunningham, in Freetown.

"After the starved, dirty, tired corps of Liberian elders were fed, they were taken to sleep their first safe, peaceful night in well over two months," wrote Walter Stewart, a senior missionary from the United States who was also living in the Freetown mission home.

For the missionaries the move was a monumental one. Most had never left Liberia before, but the desire to continue their work where they could was a powerful one. A month later it was evident why: With the missionaries assigned to the three branches in Sierra Leone, the rate of baptisms rose and the number of branches quickly doubled.

"All that was seriously needed to open the branches was more priesthood," recalled Stewart, who also credited the missionaries with being better able to communicate with the locals than the American couples had been, as well as better equipped to relate to members and investigators.

They "brought a powerful spirit of faith and devotion to this part of the mission, certainly bred out of the agony they have suffered in their beloved homeland," Stewart said. "They are first to recognize the hand of the Lord in this modern miraculous exodus."

"We know that the Lord had more work for us here in Sierra Leone," Menti said. "Many areas have been opened to the preaching of the gospel. On our journey, though as difficult as it was, the Lord provided a way." ■

## A Happy Family of Tithe Payers

By **Khadija Balie**

Cocody Ward, Cocody Stake, Abidjan

When I joined the Church at the age of 14, there were two commandments that became so important to me: the law of chastity and the law of tithing.

I had moved from Abidjan to a town, Bondoukou, about 250 miles (400 km) away, close to the border with Ghana. My parents in faraway Abidjan were members of the Church, but I was not. Before moving to Bondoukou, I met the missionaries who taught me the gospel.

I was soon converted and vowed never to break the law of chastity and to always pay my tithing. It was a little challenging to pay tithing in the beginning

because I was only a student and had no job; but I soon learned that I could still pay tithe on the gifts I received. I started to follow this law religiously. Whenever I received gifts from friends or family members, I would set aside God's 10 percent to pay when I visited the church in Abidjan during the long vacation. Soon I realized that the more I paid, the more gifts I received. So from an early age I noticed the strong connection between tithes and blessings. I have not looked back since, and the blessings have been many and endless.

My role models, my sister-in-law and my grandmother, are



**Khadija Balie**  
at work

avid tithe payers. My 80-year-old grandma, though blind and wobbly on her feet, still walks to the bishop's office to pay tithes on the little she receives. I am teaching my children to pay tithes and know that they will in turn teach their children to do the same someday.

I look forward to each month with excitement, knowing it will bring another opportunity to experience the Lord's arm of kindness in my life. ■

## A Holistic Approach to Tithing

By **Dinah O. Chimezie**

Mbieri Branch, Owerri Stake, Nigeria

In January 1986 my husband and I visited a friend who introduced us to two young men whom he said were missionaries. They taught us, and my husband soon got baptized into The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It took me some time to be convinced to accept the Book of Mormon, so I wasn't baptized until the following year.

We were learning the principles of the gospel, and as we followed the teachings, many of the

mysteries of God were unfolding themselves and enlightening our minds.

When the law of tithing and offerings was introduced to us, I personally wondered if it was the same Bible I had been reading over the years. We read about it in Malachi 3:8–12, and I was attracted to the blessings attached to the law of tithing. I decided to prove God. We also read 3 Nephi 24:8–12. Here I discovered that God placed



**Dinah Chimezie**

a curse on those who would not pay their tithes. Since I desired God's blessings rather than this curse, I started paying my tithing. We were also taught about offerings which would be used to help the poor and the needy. We decided to pay that as well.

Brothers and sisters, I want to testify to you that since I started paying my honest tithes and offerings, for 15 good years, I have not had to buy anything on credit. I feel as free as air; it has been a very big surprise to me how the nine-tenths of our income has been sufficing for all our family needs much better than the days when we kept back the one-tenth of our income for ourselves. We also decided that we would not ask for fast offering money at any time from the bishop.

We have actually been enjoying God's blessings of good health, peaceful home, increased knowledge of the truth, and God's protection. We know that God has been hearing and answering our prayers. We have never, since we began paying our tithes and offerings, lacked food on our table.

Actually, I didn't know how to economize our income, and we often went bankrupt before I learned to pay my tithes and offerings. When I remember that the offerings I pay will be used to help God's children who are afflicted in one way or another, I feel very happy for helping to ease the burdens of my brothers and sisters whom I may not know.

Now I even pay tithes on fruits and vegetables grown in my compound and on my farm. When I harvest cassava, I think of how much it could cost and pay tithes on them. Even though I do not always sell them, I know they are God's blessings and added income.

Brothers and sisters, God's promises are sure. What He says, He will do. He is faithful and just to reward us according to the abundance of His loving kindness and tender mercies. In the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

PRIMARY

## My Favorite Scripture on Tithing

**Yann E., age 10, Toit Rouge First Ward, Toit Rouge Stake, Abidjan, Ivory Coast**



My favourite scripture on tithing is Alma 13:15: "And it was this same Melchizedek to whom Abraham paid tithes; yea, . . . of one-tenth part of all he possessed."

Abraham our father paid his tithes to Melchizedek the high priest. That's why he was blessed with a great people. If we pay our tithing, God will bless us too.

**Ange T., age 9, Abobo Ward, Abobo East Stake, Ivory Coast**



My favorite scripture on tithing is Malach 3:10: "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it."

I love this scripture because I know that if we pay our tithing, we will have the blessings that the Lord has promised in this scripture. ■



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