

AFRICA WEST AREA LOCAL PAGES

AREA PRESIDENCY MESSAGE

It Is Finished

By Elder Edward Dube

Former Second Counselor, Africa West Area Presidency



Edward Dube

Years ago I found myself helpless as I watched my mother suffer from a terminal disease. As a young father with a young family and serving as a district president, I tried to figure out what needed to be done, and more especially, what the Lord wanted done and how He wanted it to be done.

In the spare bedroom I could hear my mother sobbing in pain. She was suffering from cancer and taking morphine to relieve the severe pain. At that stage, the cancer specialist had recommended that we increase the morphine dose to three times per day, and my mother had taken the

last dose a couple of hours earlier. I entered the bedroom where she was sobbing. I felt helpless and, in tears, joined her in sobbing. I prayed and cried for instant relief to my mother's pain. To this day the picture of my mother in that state remains in my mind's eye: frail, stricken, sobbing, and begging for the pain to go away. That night my mother, who was still in severe pain, looked at me, and calmly made a profound statement which taught me the lesson of a lifetime.

This lesson has sustained me and strengthened my faith in Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ. She looked

directly into my eyes and said, "It is not up to you or anyone else, but it is up to God whether this pain will go away or not." I sat up quietly. She too sat quietly. In a scene that remains vivid in my mind, mother said these words with a smile, through her tears. Her words soothed me, lifted and blessed me for life.

That is precisely the reason why Jesus Christ suffered in the Garden of Gethsemane and on Golgotha. The Savior reminds us what the gospel is: "Behold I have given unto you my gospel, and this is my gospel which I have given unto you—that I came into the world to do the will of my Father, because my Father sent me" (3 Nephi 27:13). My mother, through her severe pain, reached out to me, her son, and helped me be prepared to serve in the Lord's kingdom, under any circumstances, knowing that my loving Savior and Redeemer's experience with the bitter cup that terrible night in Gethsemane, "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done" (Luke 22:42), set forth the course to follow.

We follow our Savior Jesus Christ who directs the affairs of The Church



Christ in Gethsemane,
by Harry Anderson

of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints through a living prophet, who, with his associates—the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles—charts the way forward in building the Lord’s kingdom here on earth. The branch, stake, mission, and district presidents and bishops, who have the keys delegated to them, conduct and uphold Church doctrine in the same way throughout the world. They use the Church handbooks of instructions and the scriptures; they listen to current messages from the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles to bless the lives of those they preside over in the Savior’s way. They follow the way outlined and the example of how sacrament meetings are conducted without adjusting to suit their circumstances because it is never for our circumstances or purposes but to glorify our Heavenly Father and draw near to the Savior. He declared; “And my Father sent me that I might be lifted up upon the cross; and after that I had been lifted up upon the cross, that I might draw all men unto me, that as I have been lifted up by men even so should men be lifted up by the Father, to stand before me, to be judged of their works, whether they be good or whether they be evil” (3 Nephi 27:14).

In the subsequent days after my experience with my mother, she passed away in a hospital in Harare, peacefully

but still with the severe pain of cancer. It is fair to say that her lesson that night has guided my choices in life. Mother taught me then that in magnifying our callings, we give our all regardless of the challenges we might be going through. Our callings and assignments are only for a season. May we, at the end of our assignments, join with our Savior Jesus Christ in giving our stewardship report: “I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do” (John 17:4). The Savior, during His brief life on earth, looked up to His Father in Heaven in every way; yet He suffered. Toward the end of His mortal life, the unrelenting suffering worsened—He experienced more pressure, more torture, and more agony! Still, He endured to the very end and proclaimed, “It is finished” (John 19:30).

You and I will at some stage come to the conclusion of some tasks assigned to us. May we, when that day comes, say with a clear conscience, “It is finished.” When trials and tribulations come, remember not to be impatient with the Lord by seeking for immediate solutions. Elder Robert D. Hales of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught us very well regarding the patience of our Savior Jesus Christ in waiting for His Father: “His preparation began in the premortal life as He waited upon His Father, saying, ‘Thy will be done, and the glory be thine forever.’ Beginning in that moment

and continuing today, He exercises His agency to accept and carry out our Heavenly Father’s plan” (“Waiting upon the Lord: Thy Will Be Done,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2011, 71). Alma reminds us of our covenants and our assignments, “Have ye walked, keeping yourselves blameless before God? Could ye say, if ye were called to die at this time, within yourselves, that ye have been sufficiently humble? That your garments have been cleansed and made white through the blood of Christ, who will come to redeem his people from their sins?” (Alma 5:27).

When my assignment in the Africa West Area Presidency comes to an end, I would like to say with a clear conscience, “*It is finished.*” Will you, regardless of what calling you currently hold, view yourself, with all the trials or whatever it is you may be going through, look up to the Lord and join with Him in saying, “I came into the world to do the will of my Father, because my Father sent me” (3 Nephi 27:13). Yes, my mother needed to look at her son, the young father, the young priesthood leader, and say, “It is not up to you or anyone else, but it is up to God whether this pain will go away or not.” When all is said and done, there has never been nor ever will be anything so powerful, so majestic, so wondrous as a clear conscience that one has done his very, very best. ■

OUR HERITAGE

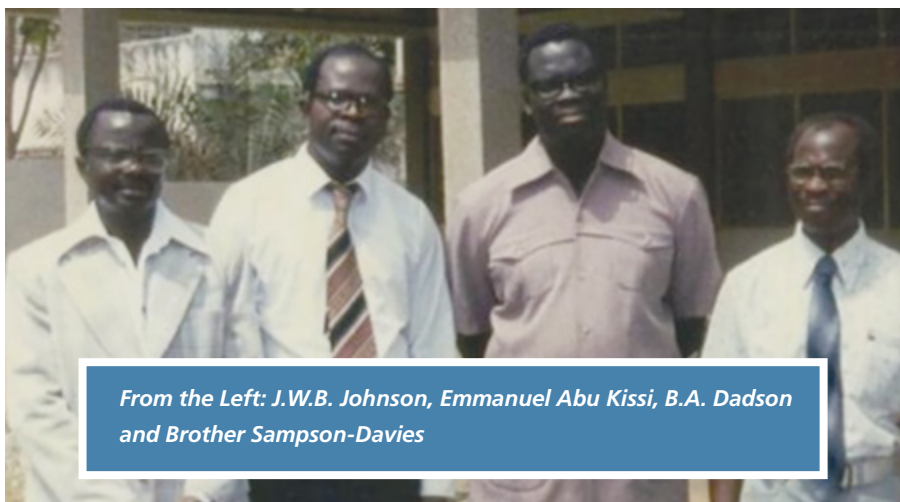
A People Prepared—Joseph W. “Billy” Johnson

Taken from an article by Elizabeth Maki

When The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints officially sent representatives to bring the Church to Ghana in December 1978, the gospel was already well-established there. Fourteen years earlier, the man most responsible for the preparation of the Saints in Ghana had been converted to the Church after reading the Book of Mormon and other tracts. Beginning with a pamphlet containing the testimony of Church founder Joseph Smith, Joseph William Billy Johnson was immediately touched by what he learned.

“Oh, I wept when I read the testimony, and I felt the Spirit. I became convinced immediately. . . . So I started reading the books, all the books. I couldn’t stand; I couldn’t sit without sharing.”

Indeed, Johnson’s conversion launched him into a missionary career that didn’t waver in the face of persecution at home and an at-times-frustrating brand of long-distance support from Salt Lake City. Johnson was tireless in spreading the message of the restored Church in Ghana, going from street to street, day after day, preaching the gospel. “I was constrained to do it,” he said. “Despite opposition I met on the way—I was highly, really opposed. But still I went on. I couldn’t stop it at all.”



From the Left: J.W.B. Johnson, Emmanuel Abu Kissi, B.A. Dadson and Brother Sampson-Davies

Johnson’s compulsion to spread the word came in large part from a calling he felt he received shortly after reading the Book of Mormon. He related that one early morning following his conversion, he “saw the heavens open and angels with trumpets singing songs of praise unto God. I heard my name mentioned thrice: ‘Johnson, Johnson, Johnson. If you will take up my work as I will command you, I will bless you and bless your land.’ Trembling and in tears, I replied, ‘Lord, with thy help, I will do whatever you will command me.’”

Together with R.A.F. Mensah and Clement Osekre, Johnson organized a congregation based on the teachings found in a single Book of Mormon

and a few Church pamphlets that Mensah had received from a woman in Europe. The men wrote to Church headquarters in Salt Lake, asking for missionaries to be sent to Ghana to baptize them and establish the Church there, but because of restrictions that didn’t allow men of African descent to be ordained to the priesthood (making Church organization there impossible), their requests went unfulfilled. They were encouraged by Church President David O. McKay (1873–1970) to continue studying the scriptures and to be faithful—officials at Church headquarters helped by sending magazines and literature to help the fledgling congregations—but for the time being, they were essentially on their own. In time,

Johnson moved his proselyting efforts from Accra to Cape Coast and did his best to organize the Church, eventually establishing several branches with hundreds of members.

For years, Johnson led the members in regular fasts, pleading for missionaries from Salt Lake to come and establish the Church among them. “The Lord knew we had no one to help us, so he helped us through revelation, daily revelation,” Johnson said. “[We were] trying to do the little that the Lord taught us to do. We were really depending upon the dictates of the Spirit.” At a time of great trial early in his ministry, Brother Johnson’s deceased brother appeared to him in a dream and said: “Don’t worry . . . you have chosen the only true church on earth . . . and I am now investigating your church.” Brother Johnson reported that he was surprised. “I never knew that the Church extended to another world. It was my brother who brought that

knowledge to me. He said that if I didn’t believe him, he would sing a song from my church, and he sang “Come, Come, Ye Saints” [*Hymns*, no. 30]. That was the first time I had heard that hymn. He said, ‘Don’t leave the Church, my brother. . . . Please see that I am baptized.’ It was my brother who enlightened me about baptism for the dead and brought it to my knowledge. . . . Most of my relatives appeared to me in dreams [saying] ‘Reverend Johnson, do you know you have a work to do for us? Our great grandsons and daughters will be in your church soon. See that we are baptized.’ I learned these doctrines before the missionaries arrived. Nothing they taught us seemed strange. They simply confirmed what we had heard.”

The lack of direction and the members’ inability to be baptized was a challenge both for the Church and for Johnson, but for fourteen years he pushed through the opposition, believing Ghana’s time would come. In 1978, it did: President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) announced a revelation extending the priesthood to all worthy males. Johnson heard the news around midnight at the end of a hard day when he was compelled to tune his radio to BBC before going to bed.

“I jumped and started crying and rejoicing in the Lord with tears that now is the time that the Lord will

send missionaries to Ghana and to other parts of Africa to receive the priesthood,” he remembered. “I was so happy indeed.” When missionaries finally arrived a few months later, they were directed to Johnson’s chapel in Cape Coast, Ghana, where they found “a large statue of the angel Moroni standing on a ball and blowing a trumpet. There were also pictures of the Bible and the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith, the Tabernacle Choir, and other Latter-day Saint scenes.”

Many of the members of Johnson’s congregations requested baptism, and on the first day 34 people were interviewed for the ordinance. The missionaries spent an afternoon and into the evening hours baptizing new members, with several more arriving at Johnson’s home in tears that night, having walked from a distant village in hopes of being baptized that day. Within a few days, the Cape Coast Branch had been organized with Joseph William Billy Johnson as branch president.

Emmanuel Kissi, a native of Ghana who joined the Church in England in 1979 before returning to his home country to help build the Church there, credited Johnson with the rapid growth of the gospel in Ghana and with the sure foundation the missionaries found when they arrived. “I believe it was because of him that the Church grew faster in



The cocoa shed that served as the first meetinghouse in Cape Coast before the first missionaries arrived.

that district,” Kissi wrote. “President Johnson, more than anybody else, was active on the missionary front.” A year after the first baptisms in Ghana, missionaries were instructed to keep baptisms to a minimum until the Church could be firmly established in Africa. The counsel, however, proved difficult to follow thanks in large part to Johnson, whom the missionaries dubbed the “St. Paul of Ghana.”

After serving as the Cape Coast Branch’s first president, Johnson went

on to serve as a district president, a full-time missionary, and as patriarch of the Cape Coast Ghana Stake. After 14 long years of opposition, mockery, and ongoing cries that he was wasting his time with an American church that would never do anything for his people, Johnson’s faith was ultimately rewarded. “It was a day of jubilation when they came,” he said. “I was so happy that they came and so happy that the Church is not brand-new; it’s on its feet in Ghana.” ■

has only seen them a couple of times during Folly’s life.

Little Folly remembers well the lack of clothing and food as a child. They lived in a one-room house without electricity. He and his siblings and grandmother were always hungry. His sweet grandmother was often ill. At the age of ten, he would go to the market and beg for money to go to school and run errands for people for money. His little sister sold small bags of water. Using this money, and fending for themselves, he and his siblings attended school when they could. At the age of 17, Folly would work for one year and then go to school for one year, and thus completed high school in seven years when it should have taken three. He recalls that during his childhood, life seemed pretty bleak and was merely a matter of survival. During those high school years, the missionaries found his older sister, and she wanted him to listen to the discussions with her, but he was not interested. Life was not good to him, and he did not see how religion could help.

At the end of his high school experience, in order to go on to college, he was required to pay for the exams. Folly decided once again to ask people in his neighborhood for help. This time he asked a very kind man named Joel Lawson-Kiniadga for help. It just so happened that

MISSIONARY

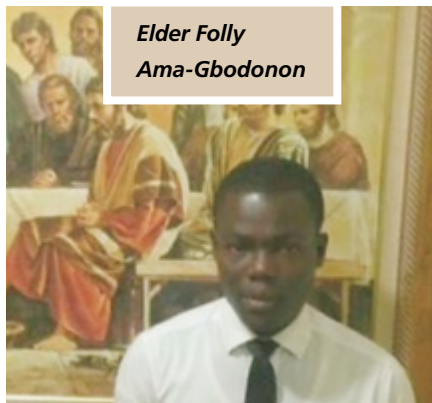
His Member-Missionary Friend Touched His Life

By **President Reid Robison**

Ghana Missionary Training Center President

When Folly Ama-Gbodonon was four years old, his mother became ill and passed away. His dear mother left behind a seven-year-old daughter, four-year-old Folly, a little sister age two, and a little eight-month-old baby boy. His father felt he could not face raising the four children, so he sent the oldest daughter to live with an aunt in a different town, left the other three children with their 65-year-old ailing grandmother, and moved to

another country. He did not wish to have contact with his children and



**Elder Folly
Ama-Gbodonon**

Joel was a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Joel and his wife had a small child, and he felt prompted to help the plight of Folly and his siblings. He also invited Folly to church. Folly took the lessons from the missionaries and joined the Church in 2013. His older sister, who was still interested in the Church, encouraged him to serve a mission. She had just married and had a baby. However, early in 2014 she was taking a taxi to work and was killed in an auto accident.

Brother Lawson-Kiniadga offered to not only support Folly on a mission but to also help him and his little brother and sister through school. As we read in James 1:27, “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.” Brother Lawson-Kiniadga, a member of the Be-Kpota Ward in the Lomé Stake, truly did this. As a result, Folly and his family have been blessed. Many others will also be blessed as Folly teaches and shares the gospel of Jesus Christ while on his mission.

Elder Folly Ama-Gbodonon is filled with the light of the gospel. His future and that of his siblings is now bright. He feels honor-bound to serve a wonderful mission in gratitude to the Lord, in tribute to his deceased

sister, and in appreciation to the member missionary who brought him the light of the restored gospel. He left the missionary training center on March 3, 2015, to serve his mission in Côte d’Ivoire. ■

From Orphan to Missionary in Ghana

By Elder Tatenda Ndunduma

What joy Elder Tatenda Ndunduma experienced as he was sealed to his deceased parents in the Accra Ghana Temple. Missionary training center missionaries, Elder and Sister Malmrose, stood in as proxy for his parents. The day before, two missionaries had performed the baptisms for his parents in the temple. He knew that it was his responsibility to make certain that his parents were both baptized by proxy in the temple and sealed together as a forever family. Now that dream has become a reality. This happy day stood in stark contrast to many sad experiences in his young life.

Tatenda’s arduous journey to the temple and the mission field began January 26, 1994, when he was born in Harare, Zimbabwe. When he was



*Elder Tatenda and
President Robison*

three years old and his brother was seven, his father became very ill. At the peak of his sickness, he could not stand or eat, and he could hardly breathe. His mother entered his hospital room and upon viewing her husband in his weakened condition, she collapsed to the floor and died. His father, because of his comatose condition, was not even aware that his wife had died. He died just two days later.

Tatenda, as a new orphan, was then sent to live with his aunt (the sister of his father) and his grandmother. Two years later his grandmother also passed away. His aunt took on part-time work to provide food, and her two children and Tatenda were often left alone, even though they were young. When Tatenda was 10, his aunt took him to a small town called Bindura, where he finished primary and secondary school.

When he was sixteen, Tatenda's sweet aunt died, and so he was left to live with her husband and a son who was his age. Life was hard, and Tatenda would often cry, wishing that his parents were still alive. He had already buried four caregivers. He was eventually sent back to Harare to live with another aunt, and there he was finally able to be reunited with his brother, who was then 20.

Tatenda now knows that this move to the capital city of Harare was also for a divine purpose. Simbarashe, the son of his aunt, was a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and he invited Tatenda to attend some Church meetings. Tatenda was soon introduced to the missionaries and listened intently to the missionary lessons. However, it was not until he heard the lesson about the plan of salvation that he was completely converted to the restored gospel.

It was the sweetest message he had ever heard in his young life, and it changed his tears of sorrow to tears of joy. He had previously thought that he would never see his parents again, having never heard of life after death. Feeling the Spirit of the Lord, he asked to be baptized on November 17, 2012. From that point on, he was a changed man. Serving a full-time mission became one of his goals. However, that seemed like an

impossible goal for him because of the expense involved in getting the required medical and dental exams, passports, and clothing.

The way was opened for him because Reeve Nield, a professional golfer and member of the Church from Zimbabwe, felt inspired to help the young adults in her country prepare for missions. She and two of her friends met with more than 100 young adults every week for several months. They helped them with many things such as getting birth certificates, filling out their

applications, studying *Preach My Gospel*, and obtaining passports. With hard work and helpful mentors, Tatenda was able to realize his dream of serving a mission.

He entered the Ghana Missionary Training Center in September 2014 and is now serving in the Ghana Cape Coast Mission. His desire is now to bring many souls unto Christ so that they will be able to enjoy the same blessings he is enjoying. Tatenda is fond of saying, "I know the Lord will always watch my back throughout my mission." ■

YOUTH

My Favorite Quote on Keeping Covenants

By Prosperity Sunday P.

Ikot Ebo First Ward, Etinan Nigeria Stake

The following quote by President Spencer W. Kimball (1895–1985) always sticks in my mind:

"When you look in the dictionary for the most important word, do you know what it is? It could be 'remember.' Because all of you have made covenants—you know what to do and you know how to do it—our greatest need is to remember" (*Circles of Exaltation* [address to religious educators, Brigham Young University, 28 June 1968], 8).



Prosperity

I like this quote because it serves as a reminder for me to always keep the commandments of God and also to remember that I will one day give an account of my deeds. ■

PRIMARY

My Favorite Quote

Daren K., 7, Lake Branch, San-Pédro District, Côte Ivoire

One of my favorite quotes on work is in 2 Nephi 5:17: “And it came to pass that I, Nephi, did cause my people to be industrious, and to labor with their hands.” Nephi is telling us to work if we want to be happy. That’s why I do good in school to get

a good job when I grow up. President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) also said that: “Children need to work with their parents—to wash dishes with them, to mop floors with them.” That’s why I help my mother do the laundry. ■



▲ Daren

◀ Daren and his family

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