

AFRICA WEST AREA LOCAL PAGES

AREA PRESIDENCY MESSAGE

Tithing: A Blessing from Heavenly Father to Help Us on Our Mortal Journey

By Elder Marcus B. Nash

President, Africa West Area Presidency



Marcus B. Nash

A father sent his son on a long, dangerous, and difficult journey. The son was worried and asked, “Father, how can I be sure to arrive safely?”

The father smiled and told his son, “Do not worry. I have provided a way for you to receive all the help you will need.”

“How will I be able to get the help when I need it?” asked the boy.

His father replied, “It is simple: love and trust me more than anything else.”

“But how can I show you that I love and trust you more than anything else?” asked the son.

The father put a loving hand on his son’s shoulder and said, “I will know if you love and trust me more than anything else by the choices you make when I am not with you.”

The boy inquired, “But how will you know what choices I make when we are not together?”

“Oh, I will know,” replied his good father. Then he added, “Now go; it is time to begin your journey.”

After walking for two days, the boy ran out of food and water. Without money, feeling tired and weak, he saw a stand where a vendor was selling bread, fried yam, roasted plantain, and sachet water. Hungry and thirsty, the boy grabbed a sachet of water and a

loaf of bread and ran off. As he ran, he remembered that his father had taught him that he would know whether the boy loved and trusted his father more than anything by the choices he would make on the journey. He knew that his father was an honest man and would never steal.

So the boy returned to the stand and returned the water sachet and bread to the vendor. The vendor smiled and told the boy that the boy’s father was a friend of his and had asked him to watch and see what the boy would do when he walked by the vendor’s stand. The vendor said, “This was a test of your character. If you had simply taken the sachet water and bread and not returned, then you would not have received any help from me and would instead have learned to be a thief.

The vendor continued, “However, because you chose to be honest like your father taught you, you are showing that you really do love and trust him more than anything else—even when you are very hungry and thirsty. You are learning to be a good and noble man like your father.” The vendor took the boy by the hand and said, “If you will work for it, I will give you the food and water you need.”

The boy continued the journey. He faced many temptations and difficulties

on the journey. But he remembered the lesson he learned in returning the sachet water and bread. He tried to show by his day-to-day decisions that he truly loved his father more than anything or anyone else. By doing this, he found people all along the journey who his father had put on the path he traveled in order to teach, help, and encourage him. When he safely arrived at his destination, he had become a strong, honest man of great trust and noble character—just like his father.

Our Heavenly Father has sent us on a mortal journey here on earth. The great test of our mortal journey—and only way to receive all of the help our loving Father has provided for each of us on our journey—is to show Him by the choices we make that we truly love and trust Him more than anything, or anyone, else. In fact, He sent us to earth “to see if [we] will do all things whatsoever the Lord [our] God shall command [us]” (Abraham 3:25).

Tithing is a commandment of God and the test is to see if we love and trust our God enough to obey this commandment. If we pass the test by living the law of tithing, we will find all of the help our Father in Heaven has provided for us. If, however, we choose to not keep the law, we will not receive the help He provided for

*“If it so be that the children of men keep the commandments of God he doth nourish them, and strengthen them, and provide means whereby they can accomplish the thing which he has commanded them”
(1 Nephi 17:3).*

us. Instead, will learn the ways of the world—and those ways cannot bring us the blessings our loving Father in Heaven offers us.

Our obedience to the law of tithing shows whether we love and trust God more than anything or anyone else. Long ago, Jesus (perhaps pointing at the fish that Peter and John and the others had just caught in their fishing nets) asked Peter on the shores of the Dead Sea, “Lovest thou me more than these?” (John 21:15). The Savior was asking Peter if he truly loved the Savior more than the things of the world, including food, fish, and the income the fish would produce to a fisherman. Peter replied three times to that repeated question that he did love the Savior more than anything else. I hope that, like Peter, we would answer the Lord that we do love Him above all else. And I hope that, like Peter did from that day on, our choices show Him that our love and trust are true.

Of the Israelites who did not live the law of the tithe, the Lord said: “Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.

“Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation” (Malachi 3:8–9). If the boy in the above story had not returned the things he stole, he would have been cursed to live the ways of the world and become a thief. By showing through his choice that he loved and trusted his father more than anything, he made it possible to receive the help his father had promised him throughout the journey.

Just like the father in this story, our Heavenly Father has promised to provide us with all of the help we need to succeed in our mortal journey—but only if we show Him by the choices we make that we love and trust Him more than anything else. Said the Lord: “Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, . . . 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” (Malachi 3:10). To open the windows of heaven is to bless us spiritually, to increase our capacity, to give us the opportunity to become self-reliant, and to make us equal to the opportunity.

Tithing is one of the most important tests we face on our mortal journey because choosing to live that law makes such a difference in our lives and in the lives of our posterity. If by paying tithing we prove ourselves to Him, He will pour out a blessing that there is not room enough to receive it. This of course includes opening the doors of the temple, where heaven and earth intersect and where the blessings of eternity are made possible.

When we consider worlds without end, righteous posterity as the sands of the sea, we can begin to understand what it means to receive blessings so great that there is not room enough to receive them. One cannot receive these blessings without receiving the

ordinances of the temple and keeping the associated covenants. And no one can develop the faith necessary to receive the blessings of the temple until they live the law of the tithe.

In addition to these wonderful eternal blessings, the Lord promises: “And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the Lord of hosts.

“And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the Lord of hosts” (Malachi 3:11–12). Those who live the law of the tithe will find themselves protected and watched over. They will be blessed to have what they need. They will be given opportunity to become self-reliant and the power to do it!

While recently traveling on the Africa continent, President Russell M. Nelson stated: “We preach tithing to the poor people of the world because the poor people of the world have had cycles of poverty, generation after generation. That same poverty continues from generation to another, until people pay their tithing.” It is living the law of tithing that will break the cycle of poverty. Those who live this law will join the millions of faithful members of the Church who bear solemn and joyous testimony that the Lord keeps His promises to those who love Him and keep His commandments.

Brother Dalebe Martin Goury of Nigeria shares the following personal experience:

“In April 1993, I was a new convert to the Church, living in a foreign country, working every hour possible while attending university. I was studying mechanical engineering. Having been taught the law of tithing, I started paying a full and honest tithe from the day I received the lesson. I had been a member of the Church for three weeks when we were asked to come to our courses with a programmable engineering calculator. With my little resources, I realized that I needed to save a certain amount each week for 12 weeks without paying my tithing to be able to afford the materials required. If I did not purchase them, I would struggle to be on the same level as other student.

“Usually, I would give my tithing envelope to the bishop or to any of his counsellors as soon as I arrived at the chapel, but that Sunday I kept the envelope till the end—as I was debating what to do. I was so tempted to return home with the tithing money and start saving. As my mind was racing with what to do at the end of the third hours, I receive this strong feeling that I had made a covenant. I felt overwhelmed by the feeling and went to the bishop’s office and handed in my tithing envelope. I never explained why I was late handing in my tithing this time. Then I went home.

“The following week, my resolve was strong this time and I handed in my tithing as soon as I arrived at the chapel. The following Sunday, I did the

same thing. Even though things were a bit difficult at the university, I was happy and peaceful because I had paid a full and honest tithe every week.

“At the end of the second week, the first counsellor of the bishopric, who studied engineering, requested to see me. I do not know how he knew that I was in a desperate need of a programmable calculator. However, these were his words: ‘I heard you are doing a degree in mechanical engineering. I completed an engineering degree a few years ago and still have the calculator I had to purchase. I no longer have need of it. Would you like it?’

“When he brought the calculator out, I noticed that it was 10 times better than the one I would have purchased after 12 weeks of saving money. How did he know my needs? Only my Father in Heaven knew. This confirmed for me the promises of the Lord in Malachi 3:10.”

Brother Goury passed the test of whether he loved and trusted our Father in Heaven over all other things. He did this by living the law of the tithe when it seemed that doing so would frustrate his goals. After some patience and persistence in obeying the commandment, he received help sent by our loving Heavenly Father. Those who follow Brother Goury’s example will learn by their own experience that “if it so be that the children of men keep the commandments of God he doth nourish them, and strengthen them, and provide means whereby they can accomplish the thing which he has commanded them” (1 Nephi 17:3).

I express the deep and abiding love I feel for you, and more importantly, I share my witness of the eternal and abiding love that our Father in Heaven and His Son have for you. The blessings promised will be yours if you obey the commandment with patience and persistence. The windows of heaven will be opened, blessings without number will be poured out, and you will be watched over by a loving Father so that, after a trial of your faith (see Ether 12:6), you will have what you need to become self-reliant. What is more, your children will be strengthened in their faith, and your righteous posterity will call you blessed forever. ■

CHURCH HISTORY COLUMN

Liberia: A Country of Faith

By Elder McCullough and Sister Christensen

AWA Church History Missionaries

The history of the Church in Liberia is an example of great faith as members of the Church strive to live the gospel through great challenges. As one reads the history of Liberia, it is easy to see the hand of the Lord working to protect His Saints and to bring the blessings of the gospel to the people of this great country.

In 1987, the articles of incorporation for the Church was approved by the government of Liberia, and J. Duffy

Palmer and his wife Jocelyn were called as the lead couple to open the Liberia Monrovia Mission. Elder Marvin J. Ashton of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, accompanied by Alexander B. Morrison of the First Quorum of the Seventy, visited the Church members in Monrovia and dedicated the land for the preaching of the gospel on September 2, 1987.

Two years after the first Liberian baptisms in 1987, the Church members' trials began with an eight-year civil war that brought physical danger, trials, tribulations, and suffering. The Lord blessed those who remained true to their faith through the adversities and tribulations of life as the following story shows:

At the beginning of hostilities, the Area Presidency directed the members in Liberia to hold home meetings and to not assemble at the meetinghouses. During the civil war, the reason for this counsel became clear. When the war got to Monrovia, many people of other faiths began gathering in their own churches in the community, seeking shelter and safety. Then the tragedy came. As the soldiers invaded the city, they entered some of these church buildings and killed all the men, women, and children. But the Latter-day Saint Church members were safe because they had followed the counsel of priesthood leaders.

In 2014, Church members in Liberia faced another challenge: The deadliest outbreak of Ebola in recorded history prompted the Church to remove its 86 full-time missionaries from Liberia.

Throughout the Ebola crisis, the Church worked through recognized relief organizations and on-the-ground partners to help communities in need. Many members also volunteered their own time to help spread awareness of proper sanitation practices.

The Church provided emergency resources to purchase local rice and oil for food, as well as bleach and containers for cleaning. Members in Ghana had a special fast and donated money to help those in Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea. Latter-day Saints in the region also continued missionary work in the absence of

full-time missionaries. Once the country was declared Ebola-free, missionaries returned in September 2016.

Today there are more than 12,544 members of the Church in Liberia, comprising 4 stakes, 12 districts, 27 wards, and 11 branches.

Recording history like this is important. Every member of the Church is encouraged to keep a journal and record the events of their lives and the lives of their families. Doing so will help us see the hand of the Lord in our lives and realize the blessings He has given us. ■

Information Provided by the Church History Library

LOCAL NEWS

Nigeria Celebrates First PathwayConnect Graduation:

Church Members Optimistic of Program Expansion in Nigeria

Adapted from Mormon Newsroom

Nigeria makes a giant stride in Church Educational System as her first set of students at PathwayConnect Worldwide graduated on May 1, 2018. The graduation ceremony was held at The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Lagos Nigeria Ikeja Stake Centre Opebi, and 92 students received their certificates of program completion.

The graduation ceremony was the crowning event for the three semester, gospel-centered academic program that began in April 2017.

Students take a course load consisting of both academic and religious education each semester during PathwayConnect program. Pupils gather weekly at a church meetinghouse where they participate in educational and leadership activities related to their courses and build lifelong friendships.

Raymond Oraegbu, the chairman of PathwayConnect, Lagos said, "I am really excited. . . this is the fulfillment of our dreams. I am really pleased that our students are able to take advantage



Elder Neil L. Andersen Ministers to Nigerian Saints

Apostle of Jesus Christ ministers to over 2,000 people in Abuja, Nigeria.

Elder Neil L. Andersen of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, counselled Latter-day Saints to always “choose the right” during a special conference of the Abuja North and South Stakes of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Abuja, Nigeria, on Sunday, May 20, 2018.

“The Important things in life are not wealth or poverty; that does not matter to God. It is not between fame and obscurity; that does not really matter to God,” said Elder Andersen. “The choices, the decisions, the importance of life is between right and wrong. This is why we are here in mortality.”

“We are to develop into a special people, that choose the right. Whatever government we find ourselves, whatever community we are in, we are to believe in Christ, we are to Love God, we are to follow Him,” he said.

“We do not fight against other religions, none of them. If they are good, if they love God, if they want to help one another, we embrace them, we love them, and we love everything that is good about them.” Elder Andersen invited all members to maintain high standards of the gospel and be special people.

of this program to improve themselves.”

Elder Clement Okoye congratulated the pioneers of PathwayConnect in Nigeria at the graduation ceremony. During his opening remarks, he said, “I thank you all for being the pace-setters, and what success you have laid down today, others will follow.”

The valedictory speech was delivered by Priscilla Halima Kane. She encouraged her colleagues, “We all have the capacity for greatness, we have proven that by our attendance here today. We should never underestimate the power we have to be successful in whatever field we choose to specialize in throughout our lives.”

Mrs. Kane concluded, “We should never take for granted all the opportunities we have been given, even the opportunity to have PathwayConnect here in Nigeria.”

The graduation keynote speaker, Dr. Adekunle Hassan, counseled, “It is amazing that the Church is providing this opportunity for its members. The inspiration behind a program like this is to help us so that we can be the best that we can be in our communities.”

Hassan continued, “Let this day be remembered as a day that you put on

the cap of integrity and honesty and be a true member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.”

PathwayConnect courses are designed to help students learn basic skills and gain the confidence and abilities needed to succeed in college and in life. Skills learned include: critical decision-making, goal setting, time management, teamwork, collaboration, study skills, budgeting, and career planning.

After successfully completing PathwayConnect, students can apply to earn a certificate or degree online from Brigham Young University–Idaho, consider a local college or university, get a new or improved job, or pursue a variety of other options.

The first BYU PathwayConnect centre in Africa was established in Accra, Ghana, in November, 2010. It commenced classes with 20 students under the leadership of Brother and Sister Samuel Boakye-Yiadom who were called as the first Pathway missionary couple in Africa. There are now two additional centres located in Tesano and Odorkor, serving students from Ghana, Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Cote d’Ivoire. ■



Francis Omoyele Falako, an arch-deacon in the Anglican Communion and a lecturer in the University of Lagos, who attended the meeting, said, “I teach religious studies. I have read about this Church and I have seen the buildings. Joining you gave me an opportunity to worship. I love the simplicity and the participatory aspect of it.”

“Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are

wonderful people with testimonies, with love and unity,” Francis Omoyele Falako concluded.

Elder Andersen was accompanied on his visit to Nigeria by his wife, Sister Kathy Andersen; Africa West Area President Terence M. Vinson and his wife, Kay Anne Carden Vinson; Elder Adeyinka Ojediran, an Area Seventy; and other Church leaders.

He also encouraged the congregation to do whatever they can to

educate their children. He counselled that members can volunteer to assist in training children of members who cannot afford to pay for their children’s school fees.

Later that evening, Elder Andersen and his wife attended a dinner at the opening ceremony of the 2018 Annual Conference of the African Consortium for Law and Religion Studies, hosted in Abuja, Nigeria. ■

Africa West Area Bids the Vinsons Farewell

In a seemingly emotional devotion, members across the Africa West Area on Friday bade farewell to the Africa West Area President, Elder Terence M. Vinson and his wife, Sister Kay Anne Vinson. The devotional was held at the Christiansborg meetinghouse, located on the Accra Ghana Temple square.

Clad in their beautiful turquoise blue and royal blue apparel, the Bountiful and the Teshie Stake choir took turns singing both local gospel songs and hymns to the delight of the emotionally charged audience.

Two soloists, Victoria Coleman and Alfred Patrick Addaquay, also performed soul-stirring music performances.

In his advice to Church members, Elder Vinson explained that members need not play a lead role before they feel special about themselves. He said, “Do not underestimate yourselves. Do not think that you are less important because you are not a leader. Do not think that you are any lesser than the person who has been called to preside.”

He admonished members to continually stay loyal to the Lord.

Recounting his single goal in life, Elder Vinson said, “My one goal in life is to be a soldier in the Lord’s army, to be a soldier in the Lord’s trust and to be loyal.”

He further expressed how grateful he is to have the opportunity to serve the people of West Africa. “I don’t know why the Lord chose us, there are many better people, but I am grateful that we were assigned to come to Ghana.”

Sister Kay Anne Vinson said she is leaving the area with a stronger testimony based on her experiences with people. “I am leaving with a bigger heart than I had when I arrived,” she said.

“The welcoming nature of people in the Africa West Area is heartwarming, and I will greatly miss that tender experience.” On a lighter side, Sister Vinson explained that she will also miss the Ghanaian jollof rice (one of the most sought-after meals in Ghana), which is a favorite of her last son.

Elder Vinson was assigned to the Africa West Area on August 1, 2012, as First Counselor to the Area Presidency. After a four-year service in that office, he was subsequently assigned as the Area President in 2016.

Beginning August 1, 2018, Elder Vinson will be serving in the Presidency of the Seventy.

Opinion leaders present at the event was Hon. Francis Addai Nimo, former member of Parliament for Mampong Constituency and his wife, as well as an entourage from the Osu Chief Palace. ■



FSY 2018 Youth Camp, Ghana

By Nana Kwabena Yirenkyi Baidoo

Accra, Ghana

After spending a week in Aburi for the FSY activity, the youth had lots of wonderful experiences to share. Programs were planned to bring out the best in the young men and women from various parts of the country. Spending time with these youth, I have learnt a lot from them and about the gospel. My faith has increased and my testimony has been strengthened as I listened to their talks and testimonies. As I interacted with them during various activities, their faith and knowledge of the gospel really inspired me. Every moment spent with the youth at this year’s FSY has been inspiring, and I would always have them at heart. Families are indeed essential to God’s plan of salvation. And surely, “There’s Peace in Christ.”

Youth Experiences



I found myself in a group in which I knew nobody. But as the days passed, I began to cope with the new environ-

ment. It was exciting getting to know people from different backgrounds. I also learnt new things both spiritually and socially. This strengthened my faith in the living Christ and also my testimony that He lives.

—Hal B., age 14, Koforidua Stake



I really learnt a lot of things at this conference which I know, as a young woman and a youth, will help me

uphold my standards and be a light to the world. I realized that when we walk with the Lord, there is peace in Him. He will give us hope and will strengthen us when we learn of Him and listen to His words.

—Salomey B., age 18, Adenta Stake



FSY 2018 was a wonderful experience. It was exciting to meet new people with whom we shared the same faith and values and had great experiences with. This youth conference is bound to last in my memory forever.

—Nana Ama B., age 14, Adenta Stake



Meeting different people and learning different things has impacted me greatly and contributed a lot to my socializing skills and has taught me to stand with the Lord everywhere I go and make the best of everything. I was continuously reminded of the fact that I have a responsibility to fulfill so that I can live with my Heavenly Father again.

—Alexander D., age 16, Ashaiman Stake



I learnt from Mosiah 2:17 that when I am in the service of my fellow being, I am in the service of God. I also learnt that throughout our lives we will face trials, but God knows what we are going through. He knows our hearts and will rescue us if we come to Him.

—Halia K., age 16, Tema Stake



Throughout the activities each day and night, I have felt the Spirit, through the choir and testimonies shared by the youth and the leaders as well. My FSY experience could be described as inspiring and educative. As we walk in the meekness of the Lord and learn of Him each day, we will find greater peace in Him, that can never be found in the world.

—Patrina A., age 17, Christiansborg Stake



Through some of the talks at the FSY, I have learnt that if we pay our tithing, the Lord has promised He will open the windows of heaven for us and we will be blessed both spiritually and physically. I know that if we abide by the laws and

ordinances of the gospel, we will make our way back to our Heavenly Father.

—Derek M., age 14, Adenta Stake



From day one at FSY, the experience has been tremendous. This FSY has been the biggest experience I have had since I joined the Church. It has helped me build a relationship with others of different backgrounds. Through some of the talks, I learnt the importance of family and family history work. It has taught me to exercise faith in all things I do. I also learnt to be self-reliant.

—Patrick A., age 17, Madina Stake



This FSY camp has been a wonderful and inspiring one. Even though this was my first, I have come to learn a lot. I learnt of how special we are to God. I have come to learn that in this world, we have a role to play in our own capacity.

—Dennise S., age 16, Teshie Stake



I had a marvellous experience at the 2018 FSY having a nice time with Brother and Sister Marley. I learnt that families can be together forever and despite the challenges, we can still have peace in Christ if we are diligent in feasting upon His words. My best experience was during the musical we had, even though it rained heavily, I felt the Spirit. These memories are going to be with me forever.

—Felicia M., age 17, Adenta Stake



One of the greatest memories I have about this 2018 FSY is that I learnt a great deal of lessons and I have received answers to my questions and I have gained confidence in whatever I do. I know that God lives and that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. I know that the Church is true.

—Ezra E., age 16, Dzodze Branch

My FSY experience was amazing. I loved every bit of it. I made many friends, I had



a lot fun, I learnt several lessons that I believe are going to help me so much in my life and I felt the Holy Ghost. We watched a video one morning about families. I was very inspired by the things I saw, felt, and heard. It was a feeling of warmth and peace and love. Sister Marley told me it was the Holy Ghost manifesting and testifying of truth to my heart. I was glad. Very glad.

—Martha A., age 16, Tema Stake



I have really learnt a lot since we started this FSY. Attending classes and being taught the gospel has helped improve upon the spiritual aspect of my life and helped build my faith in God. One thing that I have been taught and loved the most was about the family and that family is ordained of God and helps us return to our Heavenly Father. I also made new friends and built my confidence.

—Ronald A., age 16, Koforidua Stake



This FSY conference has been an activity of fun, socializing, and enhancement of faith in the gospel of Jesus Christ. The meaning of my company name sends a message to me to be courageous in all things just as Samuel the Lamanite was. I was inspired to serve a mission after listening to a testimony from one the leaders. I also learnt that no matter the trials my family is going through, if the gospel of Jesus Christ is in our hearts, we can overcome all our challenges.

—Bridget A., age 17, Madina Stake



I am very grateful for all I have experienced these past few days at the FSY. I was able to make friends, enjoy the food, and feel the Spirit. I know that everything I learnt there is true and I would always remember this experience. ■

—Emma D., age 15, Adenta Stake