

AFRICA WEST AREA LOCAL PAGES

AREA PRESIDENCY MESSAGE

Changes Are Possible through Faith in Christ and Humble Repentance

Elder Edward Dube

First Counselor, Africa West Area Presidency

During my boyhood, the Roman Catholic priest taught me that repentance is not a casual act. He said that asking for forgiveness for the same sins over and over is not the turning around which is expected of us in repentance. The priest said this to me after listening to me ask for forgiveness for stealing my mother's peanut butter several times. My mother would make peanut butter and place in a big jar. I would sneak in the kitchen unnoticed and scoop some out. I would then shake the jar so that my mother would not notice any was missing.

Once every six weeks the priest would visit our little chapel in Silobela, Zimbabwe. This was the only opportunity we had to partake of the sacrament. In preparation for the ordinance, the priest would take his chair and sit under a tree and invite us to kneel before him and confess our sins. The priest would ask Heavenly Father on our behalf to be forgiven of any wrongdoing. It was during these occasions that the priest told me how disappointed he was in me for asking for forgiveness for the same thing again and again. He said, "Edward, do not play with

God". I loved peanut butter, even up to this day, I love peanut butter! The change from stealing mother's peanut butter was hard but with her help, I was successful, and it was worth it!

What my priest did not tell me was that changing habits is hard. He did not tell me that the loving Lord will forgive me each time I sincerely confess to Him. The Lord declared: "Yea, and as often as my people repent will I forgive them their trespasses against me" (Mosiah 26:30).

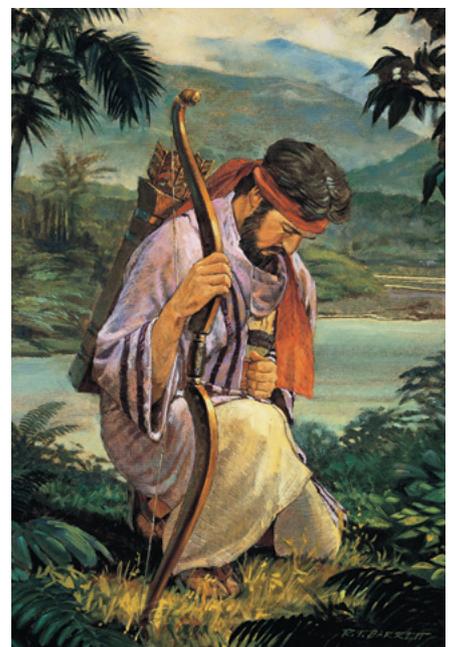
Repentance is one of the fundamental principles of the gospel of Jesus Christ and a special gift which is made possible through His Atonement. Necessary changes are made possible by repenting of sin and cleansing through the "shedding of the blood of Christ, which is the covenant of the Father unto the remission of [my] sins, that [I] become holy, without spot" (Moroni 10:33). It is only through strengthening my faith in Jesus Christ that such enduring, profound repentance is made possible. President Russell M. Nelson taught: "Repentance is a process that is never easy. But its prizes are worth the price! The prizes—including forgiveness, peace of mind, and enduring joy—are available



Elder Edward Dube

to everyone. When we begin to repent, we look forward with faith in Jesus Christ through the challenges that lie ahead and experience true joy. Repentance is powerful because it brings God's power into our lives"¹.

The lesson I learnt about repentance as a boy under a tree has to a large extent shaped my life and strengthened my faith in Jesus Christ. Enos, son of Jacob and grandson of Lehi and Sariah, learned that remission of sins comes through faith in Jesus Christ. We can imagine the experience of Enos praying all day



long and throughout the night. He began with seconds turning into minutes, minutes into hours, and hours into all day long. Even though the sun had set, relief had still not come. We learn from Enos that repentance is not a single act and forgiveness is not an unearned gift. His pleas were so important to him that he poured out his soul and sought approval from his Redeemer. His determined soul pressed on without ceasing (See Enos 1:1–12). Enos was rewarded with a remission of his sins through his faith in Christ. Similarly, it was Alma’s fervent faith in the saving power of Jesus Christ that liberated him, through repentance, from the “gall of bitterness” and the “everlasting chains of death” and replaced them with “marvelous light” and “joy as exceedingly as was [his] pain” (Alma 36:18, 20). I am absolutely convinced that it is only through the Atonement of Jesus Christ that we can make necessary changes in our lives as we repent daily.

Our prophet, President Russell M. Nelson has taught us that repentance is a process of conversion: “Repentance comes when we turn to the Lord with a broken heart and a contrite spirit. Brothers and sisters, that means true conversion! Repentance is conversion! A repentant soul is a converted soul, and a converted soul is a repentant soul”². Changes are possible through faith in Jesus Christ and humble repentance because the price

was paid by the Savior. In the Bible Dictionary, Atonement is described as follows: “The word describes the setting ‘at one’ of those who have been estranged and denotes the reconciliation of man to God. Sin is the cause of the estrangement, and therefore the purpose of atonement is to correct or overcome the consequences of sin.”³ Through his personal experience, our Savior knows every pain, affliction, or temptation we must suffer. The Savior took upon Himself our sins as well as

our pains, sicknesses, and infirmities of every kind. Knowing this gives me courage that “I can do all things through Christ which [strengthens] me” (Philippians 4:13). I find joy in repenting daily and find that my life is slowly changing and improving to become more like Jesus Christ. ■

NOTES

1. Russell M. Nelson, “Ministering and Repenting,” general conference leadership meeting, April 2019.
2. Russell M. Nelson, “Ministering and Repenting.”
3. Bible Dictionary, “Atonement.”

CHURCH HISTORY COLUMN

Faith-Filled African Pioneers: The Would-Be Saints of Ghana

“Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus” (Revelation 14:12).

The story of Dr. Raphael Abraham Frank Mensah should be remembered because of his key connections with the earliest beginnings of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Ghana.

Mensah was born in 1924 to Fanti parents from Winneba, Ghana, and was born with severe bodily defects. An inspiration to all who knew him, he was encouraged by his family to convert to Christianity and led a remarkable life dedicated to God.

In high school, he was the school chaplain and later obtained a PhD in theology through correspondence from the University of California in the USA. He went on to become an international evangelist with the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

His acquaintance with the Church began in 1962, when Mensah was introduced to the Church by an English woman named Lilian Emily Clark. After reading about Dr. Mensah’s appeal for support in a local magazine, she

wanted to help. Emily never joined the Church, but she did have Church literature and books she was no longer using that had been given to her by sister missionaries while she lived in Cornwall, England.

Acclaimed as a “highly spiritual man who could heal people’s ailments with prayers”¹ Mensah soon persuaded others to join him in organizing the Church. In Ghana, however, building up a congregation presented a financial challenge for Mensah’s group. He prayed in faith but had no success. The kind of assistance needed was not forthcoming from the Church. God had another plan for this small group.

In 1964, Joseph William Billy Johnson joined Mensah’s group. Johnson was a captain of the Army of Jesus in the Aladura Church, a position equivalent to the calling of an elders quorum president in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. That year, an associate gave him some Church tracts. After reading them, Johnson began sharing the gospel with others and he wrote to Church headquarters. “He received from President David O. McKay [1873–1970] encouragement to continue studying the scriptures and to be patient and faithful until missionaries could be sent to Africa.”²

How these two religious leaders came to agreement to work together organizing such an unfamiliar church is linked to a miraculous event.

Acclaimed as a “highly spiritual man who could heal people’s ailments with prayers” Mensah soon persuaded others to join him in organizing the Church.

Six months before meeting with Johnson, Mensah had a dream that someone named Johnson would be able to help establish the Church. Mensah became aware of Johnson through his brother, Isaac Mensah, after Johnson had given him financial assistance through his position of captain. After Mensah’s dream, he invited Johnson to meet with him in his home.

According to Johnson, Mensah “asked me to pray with him so that the Lord might sustain the LDS Mission in Ghana because he had been facing trials since he started the work.”³ While praying, Johnson had a vision in which he saw an unfamiliar book—the Book of Mormon. When he asked about the book, Mensah pulled out a Book of Mormon from under the bed in the room where they had prayed.

As Johnson recognized the book in his vision, they both experienced a rich outpouring of the Spirit of God. Johnson accepted a gift of a Book of Mormon and the invitation to help build the Church while receiving

continuing revelation that what he was doing was truly the Lord’s will.

Despite achieving success in growing their congregation while waiting on the Church to be officially recognized in Ghana, problems within the leadership threatened the church because Mensah continued to teach protestant doctrine while Johnson did not. Johnson, wanting to teach the gospel as taught by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, found most of their church members agreed with him.

Seeing the leadership begin to sway towards Johnson, Mensah demanded he should leave and “never come to the church again.”⁴ When Johnson left, most of the congregation followed him and Mensah joined with a Pentecostal group. They temporarily reunited to keep the converts together and in 1969 Johnson left to establish his own congregation of converts in Cape Coast.

On June 8, 1978, President Spencer W. Kimball (1894–1987) extended priesthood ordination to all worthy males regardless of race. On December 9, 1978, Johnson, Mensah, and other pioneers were baptized into the Church. The next day the Cape Coast Branch was organized with J.W.B. Johnson as branch president. ■

NOTES

1. Emmanuel Abu Kissi, *Walking in The Sand: A History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Ghana* [2004], 14.
2. Don L. Searle, “Ghana—A Household of Faith,” *Ensign*, March 1996, 34.
3. Kissi, *Walking in The Sand*, 16.
4. Kissi, *Walking in The Sand*, 18.

Testimony—Share It Boldly

Elder Anthony M. Kaku

Area Seventy



Elder Anthony M. Kaku

Just before the Savior atoned for our sins, the Lord said to Peter at the Feast of the Passover, “When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren” (Luke 22:32).

Peter later grew stronger in his testimony and in his conversion and was very strong in his views of the Savior and he stood by those beliefs.

He moved all the others along and we learn in the scriptures how he bore a powerful testimony of the Savior when he and John were brought before the council.

When he was asked by the council by what name he healed the man at the gate of the temple, he responded “Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by Him doth this man stand here before you whole” (Acts 4:10).

Peter’s testimony stunned the council to the extent that, when they conferred among themselves, they decided to let Peter and John go and told them not to mention the name of

the Lord again. Once again, Peter and John stood their ground and bore testimony, “Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye.

“For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:19–20).

Throughout the scriptures, many have testified of the Savior and some have done so despite the threats to their lives.

Paul was one such person who stood in front of King Agrippa and bore testimony of the Savior and taught His words to the convincing of the king. Festus perceiving that King Agrippa was being convinced, quickly remarked to Paul, “thou art beside thyself; much learning doth

make thee mad.” To which Paul replied, “I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth words of truth and soberness” (Acts 26:24–25).

The words of Paul as he shared his testimony touched the heart of King Agrippa to an extent that he said to Paul



and those gathered “Almost thou persuades me to be a Christian” to which Paul replied “I would to God, that not only thou, but all that hear me this day” (Acts 26:28–29). The power of sharing testimonies! The testimonies of the Saints touch the hearts of people and we must be found sharing our testimonies always.

Ammon is another example of one who was not afraid of sharing his testimony of the Savior. He helped King Lamoni gain a testimony of the Savior. It is recorded in Alma 18:24 that Ammon began to speak to the king with boldness.

King Lamoni was strengthened by Ammon and what he learned from him such that he also gained a testimony of the Savior, shared what he knew with his immediate family and they were converted also.

Abinadi prophesied that the people of King Noah would be taken into bondage, the king and his corrupt priests were involved in riotous living, he laid burdensome taxes upon his people and all these was to support the way they lived. He put down all the priests that his father had consecrated and consecrated new ones in their stead, such as were lifted up in the pride of their hearts.

When Abinadi prophesied of what was to happen unless they repented, king Noah sought to lay hands on him and to kill him. When Abinadi was brought before king

Noah and his corrupt priests, they questioned him on what he had said, but Abinadi spoke with the power and authority of God and bore a powerful witness of the Savior and of His works.

Even though they killed Abinadi eventually, the priests couldn't do that until he had taught them, and he had borne witness of the Savior. His testimony eventually touched the heart of Alma, one of the priests of king Noah, who was later converted by what he had heard Abinadi say.

Alma himself went on to be a great witness of the Savior and he also shared his testimony with others who were then converted.

Nephi was another who shared his testimony despite the opposition he faced in his own family, especially among his elder brothers Laman and Lemuel.

Nephi never gave up on sharing his testimony despite what his older brothers did and said to him and because of his own good examples and righteousness, he was able to help his younger brothers Sam, Jacob and Joseph stay on the covenant path.

In the last dispensation, the Prophet Joseph Smith always seized the opportunity to share his testimony of the Savior and of the work he had been called to do. He shared his testimony till his last breath.

As he relates in his story of the First Vision, he was despised by men

and much prejudice had mounted against him. He still went ahead to share his testimony “I had actually seen a light, and in the midst of the light I saw two Personages, and they did in reality speak to me; and though I was hated and persecuted for saying that I had seen a vision, yet it was true . . . for I had seen a vision; I knew it, and I knew that God knew it, and I could not deny it” (Joseph Smith History 1:25).

The Prophet Joseph Smith's testimony helped others to find the Savior and to follow His example.

Many of the early Saints had many difficulties, but they were moved by what they knew to be true. They shared their testimonies to help others. As you share your testimony and bear witness of the Savior and His works, you touch the hearts of many, and it helps them to come closer to the Savior.

A sincere testimony enters into the heart of an individual and you may not know or see how your testimony has helped people until they later share their conversion stories.

The Savior's work is true, and He will continue to hasten His work. We can be a part of this work as we boldly share the truths that we know of Him and how these truths have blessed us and others.

May we go forward and continue to be true ambassadors of the Savior in the name of Jesus Christ. ■

Two Days with General Authorities in Ivory Coast

By Herve Villard Kpole

Members and leaders from all over the country received training from Elder Christofferson and his companions on 1 and 2 June at Cocody Stake center in Abidjan.

Church members of Ivory Coast were privileged to be taught for two days by Elder D. Todd Christofferson of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles accompanied by Elder Terence M. Vinson of the Presidency of the Seventy, Bishop Gérald Caussé from the Presiding Bishopric, Elder Edward Dube of the Africa West Area Presidency, and Elder

John A. Koranteng and Elder Marcel Guei, both Area Seventies.

The first meeting held on Saturday 1 June 2019 at the Abidjan Cocody Stake center, was with members from Abidjan West Coordinating Council. There was a priesthood leaders council meeting, followed by the auxiliary leaders training meeting.

During those two meetings, the impressive work made by local Church leaders to help move the Lord's work forward in Ivory Coast was acknowledged and appreciated by the General Authorities. In

addition, they were taught important ministering principles and were invited to put in more effort in their assignment to minister to others.

Elder Vinson led the question-and-answer sessions, where local leaders were invited to ask questions about doctrinal concerns and concerns related to their assignments and was addressed by the General Authorities present.

The last meeting of that day was with the young single adults. Sister Kay Vinson started by challenging the members to overcome any situation or to achieve any important goal in their



life, if they rely on the Lord through fasting and prayer, always trusting Him. Elder Vinson encouraged them to always rely on the Lord to choose their future spouses and to hearken to the voices of the Lord's servants.

Sister Kathy Christofferson shared the importance of temples and of temple worship for the Lord and for His people. Then she invited the YSAs to offer a sacrifice of a broken heart and a contrite spirit to prepare themselves.

Finally, Elder Christofferson concluded the meeting when he taught that we can always repent to become pure. He added that: "The Atonement of Jesus Christ can transform us. We can be cleansed and be a good influence and bless our nation through our goodness." And he promised: "keep His commandments and you will prosper".

Sunday was the turn of the leaders and of members of Abidjan Coordination Council.

The day started with a special conference for Cocody Stake members in the morning during which important discipleship and leadership principles were taught.

More than 3,000 members attended the meetings during these two days.

At the end of these events, some members shared their feelings about what they learned from these meetings:

"Personally, the arrival of the apostle taught me a lot.



"His humility pierced my soul and comforted me. My only desire is to always do my best to get closer to Christ. I was enlightened by the answers to the questions posed." —*Bishop Bi Youan Serge Paulin Vanie, Avocatier Ward, Anonkoua Cote d'Ivoire Stake*

"I am grateful for this opportunity that the Lord is offering me to participate in the devotional for young adults with Elder D. Todd Christofferson. My faith has been strengthened by these great messages given. During the talks, I had confirmation of the great love that the Lord has for me. Our Heavenly Father wants me to have faith in him. He wants me to keep these commandments so that He can bless me where I am. I understood that when the Lord says that we will be prosperous, it does

not mean being totally rich, but the prosperity we are talking about is to have sufficient means for our survival and also it will give us peace. The Lord loves me personally and knows me as well. Fasting, prayer and keeping the commandments are essential means of bringing us closer to God." —*Ounleu Kapeube Hermia, Mockeyville Branch, Grand Bassam Stake*

"This devotional was one of the most inspiring among many. I liked the way Elder Christofferson helped us to recognize the Savior's ultimate love and how important we are in the eyes of the Savior. The Savior will bless us if we keep His commandments sincerely (Alma 37:13). My understanding of God's plan for His children has grown and I have also understood my role

in this plan: to be a model so that the generation that will come after me will have a sure witness that the promises of our Heavenly Father are always being fulfilled.” —*Kouassi Golet Euloge Alma Jared, Abatta Branch, Cocody Cote d’Ivoire Stake*

“I learned a lot from the meeting with the leaders, we must listen to the words of the prophet and live the restored gospel.

“Each of us makes mistakes but the choices of our lives are very important in our youth. When we pray, the Lord always waits for the right time to answer our prayers. He knows what we need. I know that God lives, that He speaks to us through His messengers—servants

who are the prophets. I also know that if we allow ourselves to be guided by the Spirit and draw closer to God with faith then He will come closer to us.” —*Yao Géraldine Bekanty, Unicafe Ward, Abobo West Cote d’Ivoire Stake*

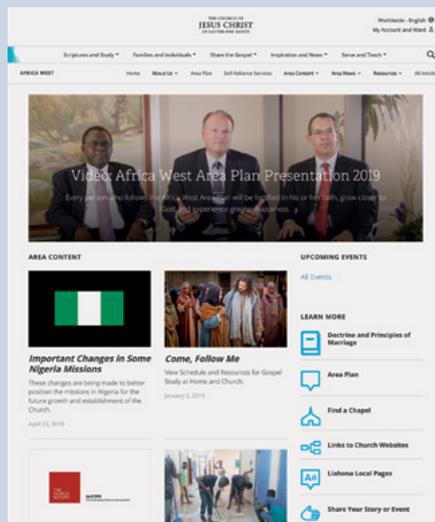
“We were blessed to welcome the leaders. Their messages were really fantastic. They taught us about keeping the commandments and blessings that come from repentance and preparing to be worthy for our temple that is under construction. Above all, they have touched the hearts of all of us because they know how we feel. The prophets are truly called by God.” —*Dramou Manuella Pauline, Dokui 2nd Ward, Dokui Cote d’Ivoire Stake* ■

CALL FOR ARTICLES

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