

AFRICA WEST AREA LOCAL PAGES

AREA PRESIDENCY MESSAGE

Pride

By Elder Terence M. Vinson

Africa West Area President

All who have read the Book of Mormon know that one of the recurring themes of the Nephites and Lamanites is what is commonly called the “pride cycle.” This occurs when people allow their focus to be drawn away from God and begin comparing themselves with others. It is not solely the bane of the rich. Anyone can be caught in this current. In fact, the drift away from God is very much like being caught in a riptide in the surf.

A riptide, or undercurrent, is a strong current which runs beneath the surface of the water and whose presence is difficult to detect for the novice swimmer in the ocean. In Australia, because the country is surrounded by ocean, much of spring, summer, and autumn leisure time is spent at the beach and in the surf. Occasionally, there is a strong undercurrent which can move you away from the part of the beach where you entered the water without your really knowing it. Sometimes you can be taken deeper and deeper into dangerous waters unless you constantly take note of your position and make the needed adjustments to the speed or direction in which you are swimming.

Pride is like this undercurrent. Unless we keep our focus on our Saviour, we can drift away from the safety provided when we focus on Him.

So what is pride? President Dieter F. Uchtdorf, Second Counsellor in the First Presidency, taught us what it really is: “At its core, pride is a sin of comparison, for though it usually begins with ‘*Look how wonderful I am and what great things I have done*,’ it always seems to end with ‘*Therefore, I am better than you*.’

“When our hearts are filled with pride, we commit a grave sin, for we violate the two great commandments. Instead of worshipping God and loving our neighbor, we reveal the real object of our worship and love—the image we see in the mirror.

Terence M. Vinson



“Pride is the great sin of self-elevation. It is for so many a personal Rameumptom, a holy stand that justifies envy, greed, and vanity” (“Pride and the Priesthood,” Oct. 2010 general conference, emphasis added).

But you may be thinking to yourself: “*Pride is a sin of rich people – and in West Africa, the people are not rich!*” Well, you don’t have to be rich to fall prey to this sin. In fact, President Ezra Taft Benson, a former President of the Church, told us: “Pride is a sin that can readily be seen in others but is rarely admitted in ourselves. Most of us consider pride to be a sin of



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those on the top, such as the rich and the learned, looking down at the rest of us. There is, however, a far more common ailment among us—and that is pride from the bottom looking up. It is manifest in so many ways, such as faultfinding, gossiping, backbiting, murmuring, living beyond our means, envying, coveting, withholding gratitude and praise that might lift another, and being unforgiving and jealous” (“Beware of Pride,” Apr. 1989 general conference).

It can be seen in those who have a sense of “entitlement,” a feeling that they are owed something by others or by the Church. Some feel that because they are pioneers or have been members of the Church for a long time, they have more rights than the more recently baptized or that they deserve to have priority consideration over others because they have served in the past in leadership callings. The Savior’s parable of the laborers in the vineyard (see Matthew 20:1–16) teaches us that the Lord does not look on such things as the natural man might. Instead, He looks at what we have become. We must develop a similar vision to His because this very sense of “entitlement” has been described by Church leaders as an “evil” because it is a manifestation of pride.

C.S. Lewis, in *Mere Christianity*, described the sin of pride the same way when he wrote: “According to Christian teachers, the essential vice, the utmost

evil, is Pride. Unchastity, anger, greed, drunkenness, and all that, are mere flea bites in comparison: it was through Pride that the devil became the devil: Pride leads to every other vice: it is the complete anti-God state of mind. . . . It is Pride which has been the chief cause of misery in every nation and every family since the world began.”

In the summer of 1986, two ships collided in the Black Sea off the coast of Russia. Hundreds of passengers died as they were hurled into the icy waters below. News of the disaster was further darkened when an investigation revealed the cause of the accident. It wasn’t a technology problem like radar malfunction—or even thick fog. The cause was pride. Each captain was aware of the other ship’s presence nearby. Both could have steered clear, but according to news reports, neither captain wanted to give way to the other. Each was too proud to yield first. By the time they came to their senses, it was too late.

There is a formula in the scriptures which describes pride. It is found in Helaman 12:2, in which Nephi, the son of Helaman, describes the state of pride that so often follows the Lord’s blessing them with peace and prosperity. He ends the verse by providing the fatal formula: “. . . and this because of their ease, and their exceedingly great prosperity.”

Ease + Prosperity = Pride

Prosperity and ease will come to the Saints of West Africa. It has already entered the lives of some. When it does, we must have already built within us an immunity. A testimony will not be sufficient. It wasn’t sufficient for Saul, David, or Solomon, and it wasn’t sufficient for Laman and Lemuel or for countless others.

We need to strive to develop a daily habit of prayer and scripture study and to always focus on God and His plan of happiness and especially on our Savior and His atoning sacrifice. The book of Haggai in the Old Testament teaches us the importance of focusing on the things of God and His holy house, the temple, rather than on our own houses or possessions.

“Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your ceiled [paneled] houses, and this house lie waste?”

“Now therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts; Consider your ways.

“Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes.

“Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Consider your ways” (Haggai 1:4–7).

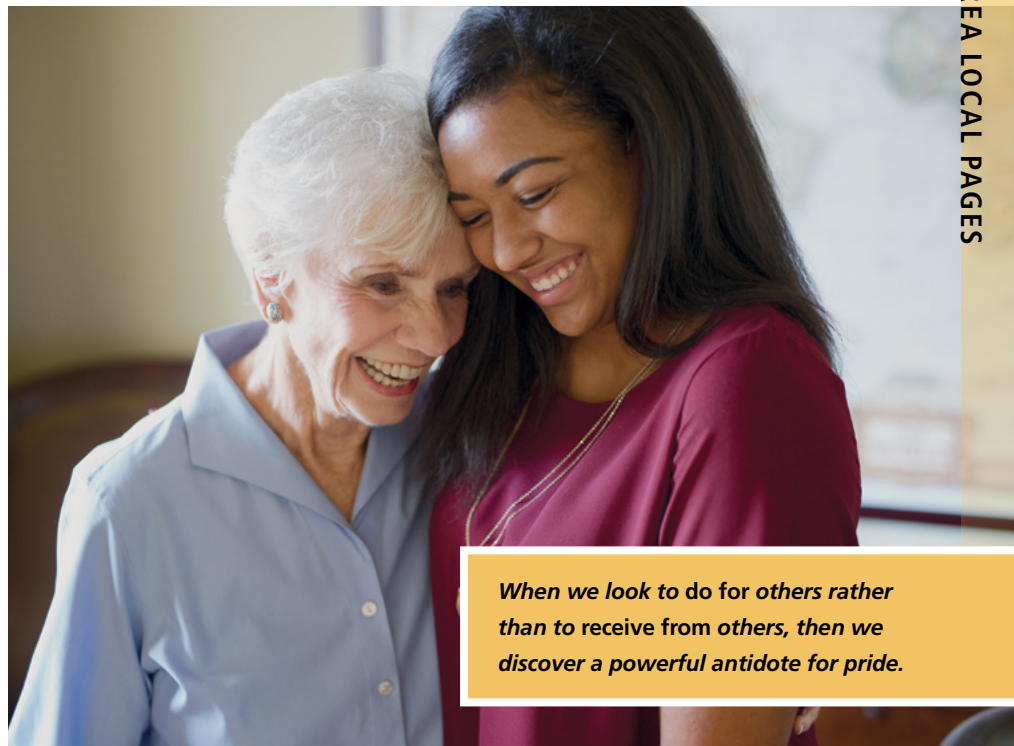
The Lord tells the people in a very clear way, through the prophet, that there is no point in putting other things before Him, because they will come to nothing. That principle still applies!

But we also see pride today, evident in West Africa amongst members of the Church. Weddings, and sometimes funerals, are an obvious example. When we focus on the things of God in relation to weddings, we focus on the temple sealing. However, what we see in practice is that the focus often seems to be on the traditional ceremony or on the civil ceremony which is performed by the bishop, with the temple sealing seemingly treated as an afterthought. Lavish parties and decorations are prepared and hundreds are invited to the non-temple celebrations, all to see the pomp and expense associated with the two families whose children are uniting.

The non-temple part of the marriage seems to be primarily focussed on the things of the world and can be an expression of pride. When we focus on God, we focus on the temple. Sometimes we see few family members and no friends at, or outside, the temple to share in the most important aspect of this union, even when many family and friends are Church members who live in proximity to the temples in Accra or Aba. This is one way we can put other things before God, and it needs to change.

So how do we consider our ways and counteract this great evil of pride?

Perhaps the example of one of the true heroes of the Old Testament can teach us something. Jonathan was the



When we look to do for others rather than to receive from others, then we discover a powerful antidote for pride.

son of Saul the king. He was the obvious heir to the throne and was a man of impeccable character. He was loved by the people who actually saved him from death after a decree by his father caught Jonathan in its declared punishment. Jonathan was as brave as anyone and with just his armor bearer at his side, he fought and killed a whole garrison of Philistines. Despite this, when David was anointed king instead of him, Jonathan pledged his loyalty to David. He saved David's life and protected this man who was to take the throne that would otherwise have been his.

Why did he do this? It was simply because Jonathan had his eyes

firmly set on what God wanted. God had declared His will that David was to succeed Saul on the throne, and Jonathan both accepted this without question and then dedicated himself to seeing the Lord's will done.

In addition to accepting the Lord's will and assisting it to be carried out, we can help others in the way that the Savior Himself taught. We read of His methods in D&C 84:106, 108: "And if any man among you be strong in the Spirit, let him take with him him that is weak, that he may be edified in all meekness, that he may become strong also. . . . Behold, this is the way that mine apostles, in ancient days, built up my church unto me."

In other words, we should not just think about ourselves and how we are doing spiritually. We need to reach out to others and bring them along with us by putting our arms around their shoulders and mentoring them. They will then grow stronger as will we. By this, we can defeat the tide of pride that might otherwise swell up within us. When we submit to God's will, we develop humility and patience.

"For the natural man is an enemy to God, and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be, forever and ever, unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man and becometh a saint through the atonement of Christ the Lord,

and becometh as a child, submissive, meek, humble, patient, full of love, willing to submit to all things which the Lord seeth fit to inflict upon him, even as a child doth submit to his father" (Mosiah 3:19).

This "submission to God's will" described by King Benjamin only comes when we seek it. By divine plan and somewhat counterintuitively, this submission actually expands our freedom and enables us to shake off the shackles of pride. To achieve this, we must pray earnestly for it.

However, our prayers should bear no resemblance to those of the Zoramites as described in Alma 31. They would stand on the top of a high stand and there compare themselves vocally to those who they believed were of lesser value than themselves. Their vanity, pride and materialistic nature were obvious. They would declare that they were special and would be saved as "a chosen and a holy people" (verse 18).

Contrast this to the humble prayer of Alma. Alma's prayer invokes the qualities mentioned by King Benjamin as previously quoted from Mosiah 3:19. "O Lord, my heart is exceedingly sorrowful; wilt thou comfort my soul in Christ. O Lord, wilt thou grant unto me that I may have strength, that I may suffer with patience these afflictions which shall come upon me, because of the iniquity of this people" (Alma 31:31).

He then continues to seek the Lord's help as he tries to do what was described in D&C 84:106, 108—that he might bring with him others who are not as strong. "Behold, O Lord, their souls are precious, and many of them are our brethren; therefore, give unto us, O Lord, power and wisdom that we may bring these, our brethren, again unto thee" (Alma 31:35).

The other ingredient found here and in all similar examples and which is needed to combat pride is the attitude of serving others. When we look to *do for* others rather than to *receive from* others, then we discover a powerful antidote for pride.

Please study this article with your family and discuss what you can do to invoke the antidote to pride so that you and they are protected when the assault of ease and prosperity occurs and so that you will build immunity to the debilitating attitude of entitlement. Determine prayerfully and with real intent what you must change in order to foster attitudes of service, gratitude, humility, and faith in our Savior as the key focus in your life and in the lives of your family members.

When we do this, it blesses us forever. "And God shall show unto you, that that which I have written is true. And again I would exhort you that ye would come unto Christ, and lay hold upon every good gift, and touch not the evil gift, nor the unclean thing" (Moroni 10:29–30). ■

Determine prayerfully and with real intent what you must change.



LATTER-DAY VOICES

Point of Arrival

By Elder Frederick Akinbo

Area Seventy

Sometime ago a friend of mine was elevated to a position of full-professor in his university. As friends and associates of this good friend of mine came together to celebrate, someone asked: “Prof, so what’s next?” The celebrant waited for a moment and then answered: “I have arrived at the final bus station.” I have reflected on both the question and the response and have concluded that my friend has yet to reach a point of arrival. This feat is not and should not be his final goal. Our goal is eternal life—which is the type of life God lives. It will take all of our life here to prepare: “For behold, this life is the time for men to prepare to meet God; yea, behold the day of this life

is the day for men to perform their labors” (Alma 34:32). If we make the mistake of thinking we have arrived, of thinking that we have no further to climb, we will have made a big mistake.

Consider the parable of the rich man:

“And he spake a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully:

“And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits?

“And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods.

“And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many

years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry” (Luke 12:16–19).

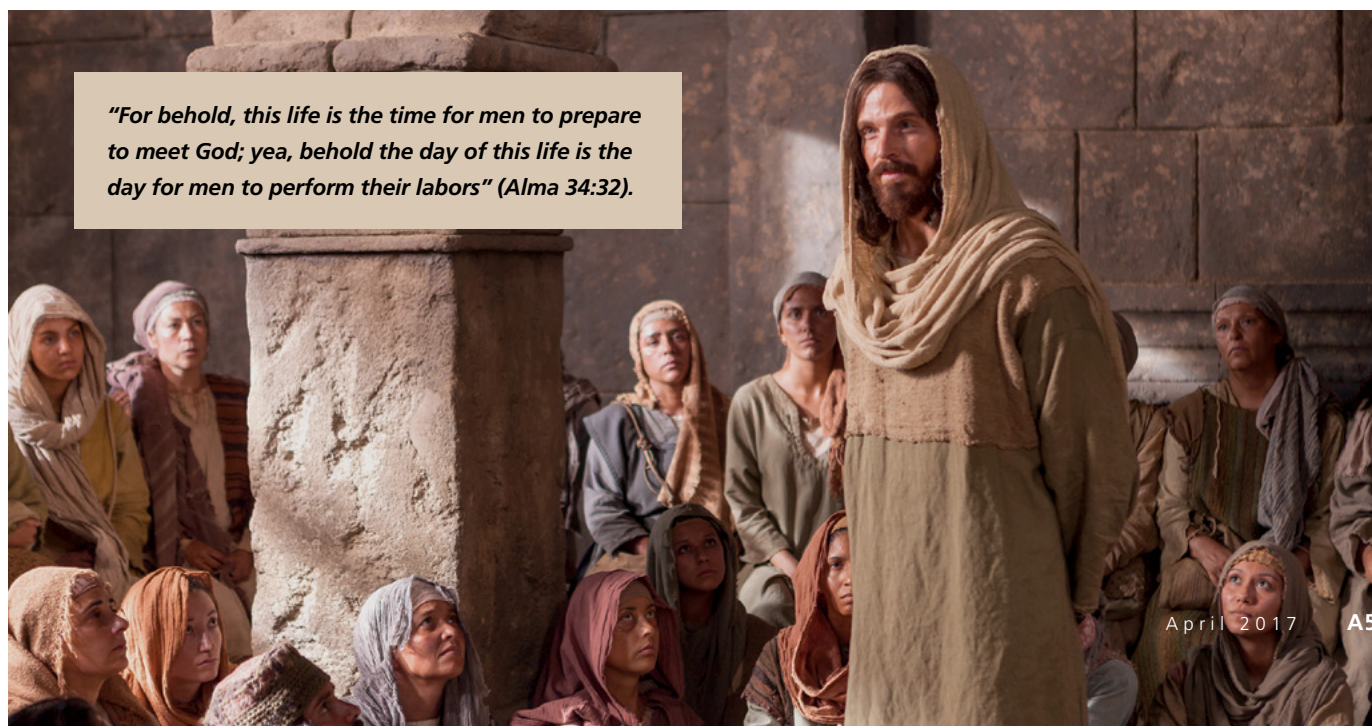
I believe that this rich man would have felt that he had *arrived*. He thought he was in control of the situation; he felt he had the world in his palm. The rich man thought he had reached his goal, perhaps even his final destination.

In thinking like this, the rich man and the professor in my story are similar. I hope that we are different. As a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, have you arrived at your final destination when you are baptized, confirmed a member of the Church, become a priesthood holder, or hold a calling in the Church? Have you reached the final bus station



Elder Frederick
Akinbo

“For behold, this life is the time for men to prepare to meet God; yea, behold the day of this life is the day for men to perform their labors” (Alma 34:32).



as a returned missionary or having received the saving ordinances?

All this effort and all of these steps to grow spiritually are not the end but are means to an end, and the end we seek is eternal life, the greatest of all the gifts of God! These steps and our efforts are a continuing part of the process, but not a state of arrival. We should remind ourselves continually of the eternal purpose

of all that we do to prepare to live with the Savior someday.

May we learn to lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven and be rich toward God (see Luke 12:21).

I testify to you that all that we do in the Church are important aids in eternal progression, which is in itself the end. I say this in the name of Jesus Christ, amen. ■

Abuja stake president, Edima Oku-Ukpong, represented LDS Charities at the handover of medications, dwelling tents, solar powered street lighting and water pumping equipment to the inhabitants of the camp. The items were received by Mrs. Rachael Alkali, the deputy director of the Federal Emergency Management Authority (FEMA), on behalf of the camp.

President Oku-Ukpong said, “The Church is sympathetic toward the displaced persons, and our members pray for them regularly.” He added, “The Church is making this donation with the hope it will give residents of the camp significant relief.”

In response, the camp leader, Mr. Idriss Ibrahim, expressed his appreciation, saying: “This is the first time we are receiving such assistance from a church.” He thanked the Church

LOCAL NEWS

Relief Provided to Thousands in Abuja, Nigeria

Adapted from a Mormon Newsroom article

LDS Charities, the humanitarian arm of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, recently

presented relief materials to the internally displaced persons (IDP) camp in Abuja, Nigeria.



Idriss Ibrahim, the internally displaced persons (IDP) camp leader.



YOUTH AND CHILDREN

for setting a good example others can emulate.

Mr. Ibrahim continued, “Your people have helped us often. They came to assist us to weed and clean the environment. May God bless you and reward you abundantly.”

Mrs. Rachael Alkali from FEMA observed that LDS Charities has been associated with the agency in providing relief materials to the distressed public. She said, “I commend your church for providing dwelling tents which comes as a big relief to the displaced persons, as well as the Nigerian government.”

The IDP camp is inhabited by those people displaced because of insurgency throughout several states in northern Nigeria. The displaced persons, comprising thousands of children and adults, expressed their gratitude and joy at the donation ceremony. ■



Lessons about Pride



Bryony

my new behaviour, and it made me very happy.

Bryony, 17 years, Christiansborg Ward, Accra Christiansborg Stake

There was a young woman who was a member of my ward. We live in the same neighborhood, and most of the time, we had family home evening together with her family. One Sunday, I learnt she had quarreled with her teachers. They said she had disrespected them. After church, I took her aside, and I asked her what had happened and why she had behaved in this way. Then I heard complaints from one of her leaders in the corridor saying, “It is always the same thing. She will never change; she does not listen to the advice

I used to feel I was better than my peers, especially those younger than myself until my Young Women president taught a lesson on pride. I felt the message directly related to me, so I decided to repent.

Before I had this change of heart, I expected my niece to obey and serve me. I searched the scriptures and learnt of how the Nephites perished because of pride.

I prayed for strength from Heavenly Father to take away my pride. I devoted time to fast so I could be prompted by the Holy Ghost if I went astray.

After a month, I noticed a change in my behaviour. I sought to serve more readily and wanted to be more Christlike. It felt good to be aware of



Dominique

because she is proud, which negatively influences the other girls.”

Surprised to hear that, I asked if what I had heard was true. And she replied that it was a lie and that she was tired of being scolded all the time. Then, calmly, I said to her: “On the contrary, you are the cause of all this, because your pride weighs you down and disturbs others, which means that God is not proud of your behaviour.” As I was returning home, the first counselor in the Young Men presidency showed me a verse in the Doctrine and Covenants to help us solve the problem.

Later, I talked with this young woman and showed her the passage from Doctrine and Covenants 101:42, which says: “He that exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that abaseth himself shall be exalted.” After reading it, she remained speechless for a while, then thanked me.

The following Sunday, she apologized to her leaders, and I could see the light that emanated from her face. Since then, she has decided to practice humility in order to be blessed and to have a positive influence on others. ■

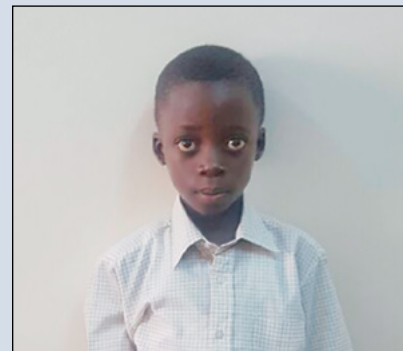
Dominique, 16 years, Kôlê Ward, Abidjan Toits Rouges Stake

My Favourite Scripture



“And the Spirit said unto me again: Behold the Lord hath delivered him into thy hands. Yea, and I also knew that he had sought to take away mine own life; yea, and he would not hearken unto the commandments of the Lord; and he also had taken away our property” (1 Nephi 4:11).

Lia, 8 years, Abobo Doume Ward



“Angels speak by the power of the Holy Ghost; wherefore, they speak the words of Christ. Wherefore, I said unto you, feast upon the words of Christ; for behold, the words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do” (2 Nephi 32:3). ■

Reynolds, 10 years, Christiansborg Ward, Accra Christiansborg Stake



John

