

AFRICA WEST AREA LOCAL PAGES

AREA PRESIDENCY MESSAGE

Integrity and Honesty: A Family, Three Mangoes, and a Bridge

By Elder Marcus B. Nash

First Counselor, Africa West Area Presidency



Marcus B. Nash

From the moment Sister Nash and I arrived in the Africa West Area, we have strongly felt of God's profound love for His people in this area. Born of that love and the hope of a bright future for every Latter-day Saint in West Africa, I will attempt to explain in this article why integrity and honesty are *vital* for our future in this life and in the next.

An honest person is truthful—even when it is not easy or convenient. An honest person does not lie or steal for any reason. A person of integrity is true at all times to the principles and commandments of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Such a person will be true to God at all times even when no one sees but God. The Savior values integrity, for He can trust those who have integrity of heart.¹

In order to understand why honesty and integrity are so important, I will share two versions of a story. After you have read both versions of the story, pick the one you like best.

Now, the first version: There once was a boy who lived with his mother and father. Their family was poor. The father got a job with a company that processed mangoes. The man thought the rich owner of the business would not miss a few mangoes. So one day the father stole three mangoes for himself,

his wife, and their boy. He said to his wife and boy: "What difference do three mangoes make to the business? The owner will not miss them, and we like mangoes." The boy knew that his father had not paid for the mangoes, but he ate one anyway because he was hungry. The father continued to bring three stolen mangoes home to his family every day, and they continued to eat the stolen mangoes. The boy grew up and had a wife and a boy of his own. He got a job with a company that builds bridges, and he helped to build a long bridge across a large river. He thought that the rich owner of the bridge-building business would not miss a few building materials. So while he was working on the bridge,

he stole materials to build a house for his family. Because he took many materials that were supposed to be part of the bridge, it lacked structural integrity when it was finished. Many people, including the man's wife and boy, celebrated the completion of the bridge by gathering together on the bridge for a ceremony. However, because the bridge lacked materials that were supposed to be used on it, it was not as strong as it looked. It collapsed during the ceremony and everyone, including the man and his family, were very sad.

Now, the second version of this story: There once was a boy who lived with his mother and father. Their family was poor. The father got a job with



Families can choose to perpetuate a righteous tradition of honesty and integrity.

a company that processed mangoes. The man thought the rich owner of the business would not miss a few mangoes. So one the father stole three mangoes for himself, his wife, and their boy. He said to his wife and boy, “What difference do three mangoes make to the business? The owner will not miss them, and we like mangoes.” The boy and his mother knew that the father had not paid for the mangoes, so they told him that they should not eat the mangoes and that he should return them. The boy’s father was angry at first, but after he thought about it, he realized that his wife and son were right, so he agreed. The next day he returned the mangoes to the business owner and felt good inside. Over time, the owner noticed that the man was honest, and because he could trust him, he promoted him to a better-paying job at the mango processing plant. The boy grew up and had a wife and a boy of his own. He got a job with a company that builds bridges, and he helped to build a large bridge across a large river. He wanted to take some of the bridge-building materials to build a house for his family, but he remembered the lesson his father had taught him by returning the mangoes many years before, so the boy (now a man) resisted the temptation to take any of the building materials for his own house. When the bridge was finished, it was built of all the necessary materials and had structural integrity. Many people, including the man’s wife and son, celebrated the completion of the bridge

by gathering together on the bridge for a ceremony. It was a beautiful day and the man felt very happy and proud.

If you are like me, you probably like the second version best!

Let’s consider two lessons from these stories. Lesson one: families can choose what kind of tradition they will pass to the next generation. They can perpetuate a wicked tradition of dishonesty or they can choose to perpetuate a righteous tradition of honesty and integrity. In the first version of the story, the boy continued his family’s wicked tradition of dishonesty when he became a man. As a result, the bridge collapsed, leading to misery for many, including the man. In the second version, the boy carried on with the righteous tradition of repentance, honesty, and integrity that he had learned from his family. As a result, the bridge stood strong and was useful, and the man was happy. The Lord states: “men . . . , in their infant state, [are] innocent before God. And that wicked one cometh and taketh away light and truth, through disobedience, from the children of men, and because of the tradition of

Those who choose to be honest and live with integrity will walk with the companionship of the Holy Ghost, in the company of angels, and enjoy peace in this world and inherit eternal life in the world to come.

their fathers. But I have commanded you to bring up your children in light and truth” (D&C 93:38–40). You see in the two versions of the story and in this scripture that family traditions have great power for good or for bad. Knowing this, our Heavenly Father commands us to establish traditions of “light and truth.” Any tradition inconsistent with the gospel should be abandoned and repented of so that we can help the rising generation live with ever greater integrity.

Lesson two: our character will be strong only to the degree that we are honest and live with integrity. The bridge in both versions was only as strong as the materials that went into it. In the first version, the man decided to take some of the materials for his own house and not use them on the bridge. As a result, the bridge lacked structural integrity and collapsed under a heavy load. In the second version, the man chose to put all of the proper materials in the bridge. As a result, the bridge had the structural integrity to stand strong when a load was placed upon it. This is how the Lord’s “law of restoration” works—what we chose to think and do will be restored to us. We will become what we choose to do, say, and think. As Alma taught his son: “The meaning of the word restoration is to bring back again evil for evil, or carnal for carnal, or devilish for devilish—good for that which is good; righteous for that which is righteous; just for that which is just; merciful for that which is merciful.

The Lord suffered for our sins so that justice could be satisfied and mercy could be given to those who exercise their faith unto repentance.



“Therefore, my son, see that you are merciful unto your brethren; deal justly, judge righteously, and do good continually; and if ye do all these things then shall ye receive your reward; yea, ye shall have mercy restored unto you again; ye shall have justice restored unto you again; ye shall have a righteous judgment restored unto you again; and ye shall have good rewarded unto you again.

“For that which ye do send out shall return unto you again, and be restored; therefore, the word restoration more fully condemneth the sinner, and justifieth him not at all” (Alma 41:13–14; emphasis added).

This is important because each of us is a beloved spirit son or daughter of Heavenly Parents.² Before this world

was created, our Heavenly Father instituted His plan whereby we could receive the greatest of all the gifts of God: eternal life.³ Eternal life is God’s life, and to receive eternal life is to become like Him and to live the kind of life God lives.⁴ In order to receive this greatest of all gifts, *we must become like Him*. It is for this reason that we have been sent to earth and live in mortality so that we can have the opportunity to grow and progress by obtaining a physical body, gaining experience, living by faith, and learning to choose good over evil. Our Heavenly Father knew that everyone on earth (except children under eight years of age) would be made impure by sin. Since nothing impure can dwell in the presence of God, our Heavenly Father anointed

Jesus, His firstborn Son, to be our Savior. The Lord suffered for our sins so that justice could be satisfied and mercy could be given to those who exercise their faith unto repentance.⁵

As part of the plan of salvation, when our mortal life ends, we will be judged of our works. Importantly, *we will be judged by what we have become as a result of our choices*.⁶ Those who are in a state contrary to the nature of God are in a state contrary to the nature of happiness.⁷ The more we become like God, the happier we are! The sort of person we become in our lifetime will depend entirely upon how honest we have been and whether we live our lives with integrity so that the Holy Ghost can sanctify us to make us better, more holy, more like Christ.

The Holy Ghost sanctifies those who have the integrity to live the doctrine of Christ, who exercise faith in Christ unto repentance, are baptized, receive the gift of the Holy Ghost and endure to the end in keeping the associated covenants.⁸

If we live with integrity to this doctrine, we will, through the Savior and His Atonement, be found spotless, guiltless, joyous, and pure at the time of judgment and receive eternal life. However, if we have not lived with integrity, we will be like the bridge in the first version of the story; we will sadly fail to fulfill our divine potential. Importantly, those with integrity recognize that no one is perfect in all things, so they willingly repent when they do not live as they should. Repentance brings us “unto the power of the Redeemer, unto the salvation of [our] souls” (Helaman 5:11). It is through repentance that people will have their integrity fully restored to them!

A few years ago, I stood in the ancient ruins of the city of Pachacamac in Peru, South America. Pachacamac was magnificent in antiquity: the ruler made it a grand, impressive place. It included the gold-covered Temple of the Sun, situated on a bluff overlooking the Pacific Ocean. It must have been amazing to behold when it was built. Now, a few hundred years later, what remains of Pachacamac are lumps of eroded adobe, some rock walls, and some terraces and staircases. I commented to Sister Nash that I imagine that the Inca ruler of

Pachacamac must have thought he was a big and important man, but that in the end, all of the splendor of Pachacamac was reduced to dust. There are too many of us who sell their divine potential for what they will discover in the end has no more meaning than what remains today of the ancient ruins of Pachacamac: eroded lumps of mud.

In contrast, our Savior, who has all power in heaven and earth,⁹ promises that He will cause that those who obey His law with sacrifice shall “bring forth as a very fruitful tree which is planted in a goodly land, by a pure stream, that yieldeth much precious fruit” (D&C 97:8). And that tree will produce fruit that is “most precious, which is sweet above all that is sweet . . . and ye shall feast upon this fruit even until ye are filled, that ye hunger not, neither shall ye thirst” (Alma 32:42).

In light of these truths, how can we do anything other than strive to live honestly and with integrity? Anyone who chooses dishonesty over integrity and fails to repent will cheat himself of the resplendent blessing of “peace in this world, and eternal life in the world to come” (D&C 59:23). This is because we cannot fake integrity: “Thou art none the holier if praised, and none the viler if thou art reproached. Thou art what thou art.”¹⁰

Although we can limit through our dishonesty and lack of integrity what God can make of us, the converse it true; if we live with honesty and integrity, there is no limit to what He

can make of us! Those who choose to be honest and live with integrity will walk with the companionship of the Holy Ghost, in the company of angels, and enjoy peace in this world and inherit eternal life in the world to come—ultimately receiving all that the Father hath! They will walk amongst poverty but will not be in poverty, for “the riches of eternity” (D&C 38:39) are theirs as they endure to the end with integrity. My invitation is that each of us live with integrity so that we can with joy press forward with a “perfect brightness of hope” (2 Nephi 31:20). ■

NOTES

1. See Doctrine and Covenants 124:15, 20.
2. See “The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Liahona*, Nov. 2010, 129.
3. See Doctrine and Covenants 14:7.
4. See Henry B. Eyring, “Eternal Families,” *Liahona*, May 2016, 81; see also Bruce R. McConkie, in Conference Report, Apr. 1970, 26.
5. See Alma 34:11–17.
6. See Dallin H. Oaks, “The Challenge to Become,” *Liahona*, Jan. 2001, 40–42.
7. See Alma 41:11.
8. See 2 Nephi 31:5–21.
9. See Matthew 28:18.
10. Thomas à Kempis, *The Imitation of Christ, Book II: Admonitions Concerning the Inner Life* (1877), 93.

VISIT AREA WEBSITES!

Africa West Area Websites:

English: africawest.lds.org

French: afriqueedelouest.lds.org

Mormon Newsroom Ghana:

www.mormonnewsroom.com.gh

Mormon Newsroom Nigeria:

www.mormonnewsroom.org.ng ■

MEMBER'S VOICE

The Lord Had a Plan

By Liz Liljenquist

David Fosu Asiedu, a member of the Adenta Second Ward in Accra, Ghana, shared with me this history of his family's membership in the Church.

When David Fosu Asiedu was 17 years old, his elder brother, Richmond, a student away at university, joined The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This surprised his family because they were all members of the same church as their extended family, for which their father served as pastor.

When his mother, Joyce, went to visit her son at university, she was so impressed by the change that had taken place in him that she came home

and immediately told her family. His father, Robert, had the same reaction after speaking to his son. He was puzzled as to why this change had taken place. He taught his children to believe in Jesus Christ and live His commandments. What did this new church have that theirs didn't? He asked his son about it and Richmond sent the missionaries to him.

At the time, David and his younger sister, Charlotte, lived at home with their parents. The three older boys

were all away at school. The missionaries came and taught the four members of the Asiedu family about the restored gospel of Jesus Christ and the Book of Mormon, and challenged them to pray about it to find out if it was true.

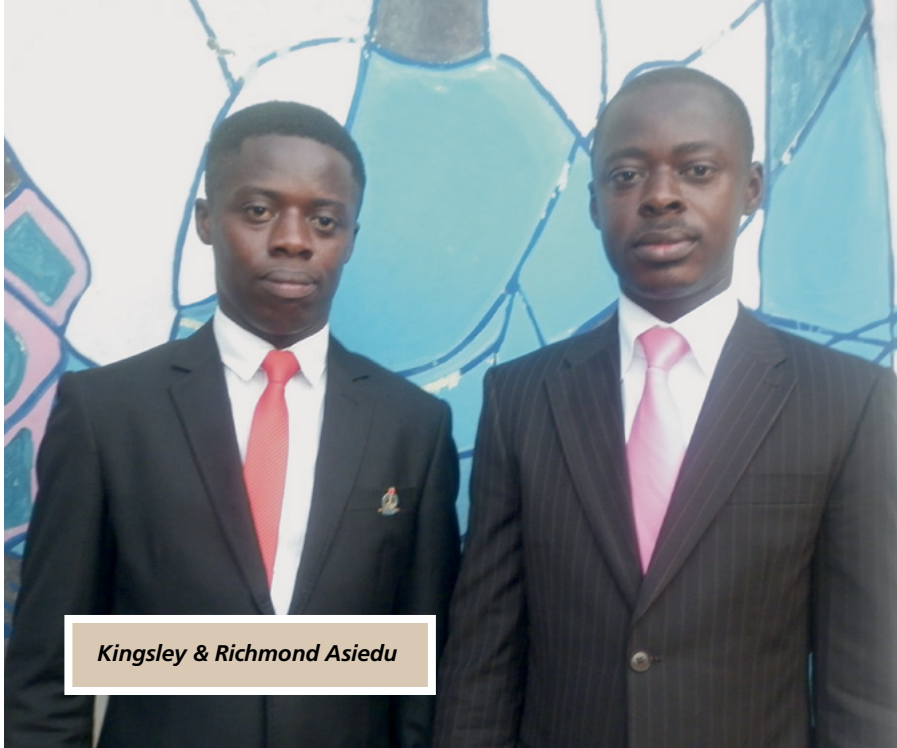
They did. The answer came first to David's father. Robert responded to the message of the Restoration of the original Church organized by Jesus Christ. He was especially impressed that this Restoration brought the keys to the holy priesthood with the authority to perform saving ordinances to bring his family back to his Father in Heaven.

The family eagerly joined the Church, and just three months later, the two older boys also joined. The visible influence of the gospel in one brother's life had led them all to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Along with their joy in their new life came trials that would test their conviction. Soon after their baptism, David's grandmother, Aunty Charlotte, who was the family matriarch and presided over their large family church, returned home from an extended visit to France. When she learned that her daughter's family (including Robert, who held the prominent position of pastor) had joined another church, she became extremely angry. She did everything in her power to make them leave this new church, even to the point of encouraging her daughter to divorce Robert. She cut them off from association with the extended family. Robert's primary source of income had been from his work as pastor. Now that



*Afua Serwa &
David Asiedu*



Kingsley & Richmond Asiedu



Robert Kofi Asiedu

was gone, and they were left to survive on the money they earned from odd jobs they could find. Despite this, their father encouraged them to remain true, teaching them that hardship would bring about great things in their lives.

Their circumstances became very desperate. At one point, they had no food, and the only money they had in the house was the money they had set aside for tithing. It was fast Sunday that week, but they had no money for transportation to church. Despite their hunger, they set out for church, an hour's walk away. They arrived and joyfully paid their tithing in full, telling no one of their plight. As they journeyed home, they were filled with happiness and gratitude that they had been able to pay their tithing.

God blessed them for their faithfulness. He did not send them more money, or jobs or food, and their situation remained the same for several years. The miracle they received was that during all this time, the little food they could obtain nourished them in such a way that they became healthier

and happier than ever before, despite their hunger. People would often ask them what they were doing that made them glow with such good health. Others never knew that they were surviving on very little. Not only this, but the family was also happy and never felt ill or weak. God fed them in His own way, and they thrived.

About two and a half years later, on a Sunday after their stake conference, the stake presidency came to the Asiedu home to visit with Robert. During their conversation, Robert shared something very personal. He told them that his faith was firm, and that his soul will find rest if he departs from this life because he knows he has accomplished the work he had come on earth to do, which was to bring his family to the right church.

Six months later, David's father, who had been the picture of health, passed away suddenly. The family was devastated by the loss but sustained by their knowledge of the great plan of happiness they had come to understand. It was at this time that the

members of the stake presidency who had visited Robert shared his words of six months before. The Asiedu family was comforted by this reassurance that their father's passing was part of a greater plan and that he had accomplished his mission in mortality.

With Robert's passing, another great miracle occurred. Their grandmother, Aunty Charlotte, who had been so angry with them and cut them off from the family, watched the way her daughter and grandchildren reacted to the death of their husband and father. She saw that they mourned and were sad that he was no longer with them, but she was surprised to see that they still had hope and did not despair. Their conviction that they would be with their beloved Robert again impressed her deeply. Then, when she attended the LDS funeral service and heard the principles of the Atonement of Jesus Christ and the plan of salvation preached there, her heart was touched and she became interested in finding out more. Aunty Charlotte, a well-educated and studious

woman, asked to see literature about the Church.

Just four days after his father's death, David received his mission call to serve in the Ghana Accra Mission. During the weeks before his departure, his uncles and extended family all tried to tell him that he should not go on this mission, as it was his duty to stay home and care for the family. But David stood firm in his faith, and with the help of his mum and siblings, he chose to serve the Lord.

In the time before David left for his mission, Aunty Charlotte continued to study, but he doubted that she would ever humble herself enough to join the Church that she had criticized for so many years. Imagine the joy he felt, 18 months into his mission, when during a Mother's Day phone call, his family surprised him with the news that his grandmother Aunty Charlotte had not only been baptized but had also been to the temple and received her endowment. She had become a faithful and powerful force for good in her ward and neighborhood, and her newfound happiness led others to join the Church.

As he looks back, David sees that the Lord had a plan for their family, and that there was a purpose behind all they experienced. The lesson their father had taught them that hardship would bring about great things had truly come to pass. He sees the greater purpose of his father's death being the means of bringing his grandmother into the Church, and the influence of their example quietly changed the hearts of those around them.

God's plan continues to work in the lives of David's family and friends. Aunty Charlotte passed away recently. The family is planning a funeral service where the truths of the restored gospel will be taught. They know that, like Lehi, their grandmother would say,

"I partook of the fruit thereof [and] it filled my soul with exceedingly great joy; wherefore, I began to be desirous that my family should partake of it also; for I knew that it was desirable

above all other fruit" (1 Nephi 8:12).

The Asiedu family knows that nothing will make their grandmother happier than to know the occasion of her passing will be the means of influencing her loved ones to come unto Christ and partake of the beautiful fruit of the tree of life. They know that the Lord worked His plan on behalf of their family and that He will continue His marvelous work, "to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man" (Moses 1:39). ■

LOCAL NEWS

"God Is Just"

Adapted from Mormon Newsroom, Nigeria

"God is just," says Chief Judge Ikponmwen.

"Justice is the will of God and injustice is not of God," stated Honorable Justice Esohe Frances Ikponmwen, the newly sworn-in Chief Judge of Edo State. Justice Ikponmwen is a long-standing member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

The oath of office was administered to Ikponmwen in the Banquet Hall, Government House, Benin City by His Excellency, Mr. Godwin N. Obaseki, Governor of Edo State.

"She is known to be fair and strict in the dispensation of justice," Obaseki said, "Your wealth of experience as a judge and your ability to discharge your duties without fear or



Chief Justice Esohe Frances Ikponmwen speaks during her swearing-in ceremony.

favor, is enough signal that you are ready and qualified to lead our state judiciary," he added.

Ikponmwen declared in an interview following the ceremony that her attitude of work is to follow the admonition of King Benjamin, a servant of God in ancient America, who said, "when ye

YOUNG WOMEN CORNER

Honesty

My favorite scriptures about honesty are 2 Nephi 9:34, which says, “Wo unto the liar, for he shall be thrust down to hell,” and Doctrine and Covenant 97:8, “Verily I say unto you, all among them who know their hearts are honest, and are broken, and their spirits contrite, and are willing to observe their covenants by sacrifice—yea, every sacrifice which I, the Lord, shall command—they are accepted of me.”

Pascaline Appiah K., Teshie First Ward



The scripture I love to share about honesty and integrity is Romans 12:17, “Recompense to no man evil for evil, provide things honest in the sight of all men.”

Inasmuch as I try to be honest and say the truth always, in all things at all places, I know and believe that I will free myself from bad company and avoid troubles that may confront me. ■

Esther A., Teshie Second Ward, Christiansburg Stake



Madam Chief Justice meets with family and friends prior to ceremony honoring her (pictured with Elder Akinbo, far left)

are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God” (Mosiah 2:17).

As a Chief Judge, Ikponmwen will head the state judiciary and act as a chief administrative officer as well as spokesperson for the judicial branch.

Elder Frederick Akinbo, an Area Seventy, describes Ikponmwen as a woman of virtue who relies on

the Spirit. “Virtue is a prerequisite to receiving spiritual guidance. It is a pattern of thought and behavior that is based on high moral standards. It is a word we do not hear frequently in today’s society,” he said.

Ikponmwen joined the judiciary in 1980 and is the first female indigene of Benin Kingdom to be sworn in as the Chief Judge of Edo State. ■

CALL FOR ARTICLES

Your local pages section is produced by members in your own area under the guidance of the Area Presidency so that it can address the needs and experiences of members where you live. The inclusion of the local pages in each issue depends on the availability of local content. We invite you to contribute your faith-promoting thoughts and experiences by contacting your local editor:

AfricaWestWebsite@ldschurch.org ■