

AFRICA SOUTHEAST LOCAL PAGES

AREA PRESIDENCY MESSAGE

“Act . . . Not . . . Acted Upon”

By Elder Kevin S. Hamilton

President, Africa Southeast Area Presidency

“They have become free forever . . . to act for themselves and not to be acted upon” (2 Nephi 2:26).

Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles was recently in the Africa Southeast Area and on one occasion, while speaking to a group of young single adults, he held up his scriptures. “These scriptures are an object,” he said. “They have no ability to move on their own unless I move them.” He lifted them up to show the congregation. “You and I, however, are agents. We have the power in us to act, not simply to be acted upon.” In this simple example, Elder Bednar taught us all that we can act, we can choose. We have the power to do for ourselves what we choose to do.

This principle of action or agency, called “moral agency” in the Doctrine and Covenants (see D&C 101:78), is

central to the restored gospel of Jesus Christ. It is the foundation for God’s plan for His children, the plan of salvation. In the Book of Mormon, the prophet Lehi taught, “[God] hath created all things, both the heavens and the earth, and all things that in them are, both things to act and things to be acted upon. . . .

“[And] the Lord God gave unto man that he should act for himself. . . .

“ . . . And because that [men] are redeemed from the fall they have become free forever . . . to act for themselves and not to be acted upon” (2 Nephi 2:14, 16, 26; emphasis added).

In our day, the Lord declared through the Prophet Joseph Smith that “men should be anxiously engaged in



Elder Kevin S. Hamilton

a good cause, and do many things of their own free will, and bring to pass much righteousness;

“For the power is in them, wherein they are agents unto themselves” (D&C 58:27–28; emphasis added). Think about that statement: We are empowered agents, anxiously engaged. We have the power to act for ourselves.

While on a mission tour recently, I met a young missionary by the name of Elder Tshiambwe. He came from a small village in a remote part of Africa. He wanted to serve a mission but was unable to afford even the basic requirements, such as a passport, needed to prepare for a call to serve. He and his father came up with a plan. Using his bicycle, Elder Tshiambwe would transport bananas from the many small banana growers in the region to the markets in the larger villages. His banana transportation business earned him a small but steady income from which he was able to save for his mission. For several years he saved and planned for his mission. When he was finally ready, he received a call from the President of the Church to serve in his native country. He is now returned from his mission, but it is no surprise that he served with honor and distinction. He had learned in his youth that he was an agent, not an object. He had the ability to act, not simply



“We have the power in us to act, not simply to be acted upon.”
— Elder David A. Bednar



be acted upon. Elder Tshiambwe was an agent with power to act and to take control of his life. I am confident that he will go forward and do many good things in his life as a result of these lessons learned.

I was in another country not long ago holding a fireside for young adults. During the question-and-answer portion of the meeting, a young brother raised his hand and asked when the Church would provide more financial assistance for young adults to help them become self-reliant. I thought about this for a moment and then felt impressed to ask him if he had served a mission. He replied that he had. I asked him if he had learned to set goals while on his mission, to plan, to exercise faith, and to work diligently. He was good-natured about it and smiled as he replied that he had in fact learned those life skills. I then said to him, “You are an agent, not an object. You have the ability to act and to

do whatever it is that you choose to do. You have been taught everything that you need to be successful in life. Now it is up to you to go forward in faith and to act, rather than to sit back and wait to be acted upon.” I hoped that he felt my love for him and that somehow this exchange helped him to reorient his vision for himself.

Even in the early days of the Church, when the new converts were struggling to fully comprehend all that the God had prepared for them, the Lord instructed the Prophet Joseph Smith that they needed to learn to be independent, to be agents rather than objects. “Notwithstanding the tribulation which shall descend upon you, that the church may stand independent above all other creatures” (D&C 78:14). As His Church stands

independent of all things, so too must we, His children, learn to be independent. “The power is in them,” the scripture says (D&C 58:28). We are agents, not objects. We can act and not simply be acted upon.

I testify that each of us “is a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents, and, as such, each has a divine nature and destiny” (“The Family: A Proclamation to the World,” *Liahona*, May 2017, 145). As such, we have the God-given potential to rise up out of our circumstances, whatever they may be, and stand independently as agents not objects. We have been charged “to do many things of [our] own free will” (D&C 58:27). If we will go forward in faith, our Heavenly Father will not let us fail in this noble quest. ■

LOCAL PRIESTHOOD LEADERS

Build Spiritual and Temporal Self-Reliance

By **Elder W. Jean-Pierre Lono**

Area Seventy



Elder W. Jean-Pierre Lono

We teach self-reliance as a principle of life, that we ought to provide for our spiritual and temporal needs and take care of ourselves. This great blessing from our Heavenly Father will help us to be happy and independent and will make our lives better here on earth and in the eternities, for as we embrace the principle of work, with integrity, our lives will be blessed forever.

In His spiritual work, our Heavenly Father expresses His purpose—to see His children happy (see Moses 1:39). In Doctrine and Covenants 130:21, there is a divine law attached to love that extends to all aspects of human life (spiritual and temporal), which is the law of obedience. The sons of Lehi did take their bows and their arrows and go forth into the wilderness to slay food for their families. With obedience and faith, they followed the compass and although they had many trials and dissensions among themselves, they worked together for their personal and family well-being.

Nephi testifies as follows: “They [the pointers on the compass] did work according to the faith and diligence which we did give unto them. . . .

“ . . . And thus we see that by small means the Lord can bring about great things” (1 Nephi 16:28, 29). Our

Heavenly Father revealed, in Doctrine and Covenants 29:31 that “by the power of my Spirit created I them; yea, all things.” In verse 32, He adds, “First spiritual, secondly temporal.” He instructs, “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness” (Matthew 6:33), which is the way and means to our self-reliance. Doctrine and Covenants 29:34 clearly says, “Verily I say unto you that all things unto me are spiritual, and not at any time have I given unto you a law which was temporal; . . . nor the children of men; . . . whom I created.”

In His plan to help us individually on our path toward self-reliance (see D&C 104:13–17), He says, “I, the Lord, . . . built the earth . . .

“And it is my purpose to provide for my saints, for all things are mine” (verses 14–15).

In verse 17, He says, “For the earth is full, and there is enough and to spare; yea, I prepared all things, and have given unto the children of men to be agents unto themselves,” in order for us to become self-reliant.

Our self-reliance is a personal matter and depends on our degree of faith, as defined in the vision of our area plan for 2018.

We demonstrate our faith by following the restored gospel and by

our baptism. Each one of us has received a portion of the Spirit of God. Our souls need to be strengthened. We need to build our spiritual experiences. Self-reliance is defined as an ability to self-govern, an ability to provide the necessities of life for self and family through commitment and efforts.

Becoming spiritually self-reliant encompasses everything that man needs to live on. These three aspects are the priorities of the vision of our area plan for 2018:

1. Increase faith through the payment of tithes and offerings. It is impossible for a man to come out of his economic difficulties and physical sufferings by disobeying or not keeping the law of tithing and offerings (see the poor widow’s offering in Luke 21:1–4). In 3 Nephi 24:12, Heavenly Father promised wonders unto His obedient children: “Ye shall be a delightsome land.” In verse 11, He says, “And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground.” Let us consider the case of Ananias and Sapphira, who lied to the Lord by keeping back part of their tithing (see Acts 5:1–11). The



Lord tells us that if man offereth a gift without real intent, it profiteth him nothing (see Moroni 7:6).

2. Take responsibility to work to improve our lives. A member of the Church is responsible for his spiritual and temporal well-being. Having received from our Heavenly Father the gift of knowledge (see Helaman 14:30), we have the prerogative to decide for ourselves, to solve our own problems, and to strive to become self-reliant (see D&C 58:28). President Thomas S. Monson (1927–2018) has counseled, “Let us work for what we need. Let us be self-reliant and independent. Salvation can be obtained on no other principle.”¹ The Africa Southeast Area Presidency counsels to “assume personal responsibility to work to improve our lives.” Our Heavenly Father declared, “In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread” (Genesis 3:19) and not in the sweat of our neighbor’s face. 2 Nephi 5:15 and 17 relate that the people of Nephi were industrious, for they did “labor with their hands.” Of this principle, the Lord was very clear in saying, “Thou shalt not be idle; for he that is idle shall not eat the bread nor wear the garments of the laborer” (D&C 42:42).
3. Develop spiritual self-reliance in missionary work. As followers of Christ who live according to His teachings, we are sent two by two to build the world: “And ye shall

go forth in the power of my Spirit, preaching my gospel, two by two” (D&C 42:6). It is also a personal responsibility to develop faith, obedience, and a commitment to serve His children. Once you are committed to the work, the Savior will never leave you alone but will go with you. He will “open the hearts of the people, and they will receive you” (D&C 31:7).

As Elder David A. Bednar of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles taught to the Africa Southeast Area Presidency and other General Authority Seventies, “Let us teach the pearl rather than the potter, for the doctrine of worldliness does not nurture man.” Get rid of pride, for whosoever does not obey the Lord’s commandment is proud, and our Heavenly Father resisteth him (see 1 Peter 5:5). “Pride, and arrogancy . . . do I hate” (Proverbs 8:13), which are the fruit of idleness and slothfulness—the opposite of self-reliance. Our faith requires that these six principles be reinforced:

1. Pray individually and as a family with humility and faith.
2. Keep and observe the Sabbath day, for we talk of Christ on His holy day.

3. Strengthen oneself and family according to the gospel.
4. Counsel in families and wards and strengthen priesthood quorums and auxiliaries.
5. Prepare your family members to go to the temple.
6. Read, study, and ponder the teachings of the Book of Mormon and invite a friend to the sacrament meeting.

Put your faith into action. President Gordon B. Hinckley (1910–2008) taught, “Without hard work, nothing grows but weeds.”² Thomas S. Monson taught this Formula “W”: “Work will win when wishy-washy wishing won’t.”³

“Wherefore, the Lord God gave unto man that he should act for himself. . . .

. . . [And man and woman are free] to act for themselves and not to be acted upon” (2 Nephi 2:16, 26).

I testify that we have a Father who created us and who loves us. Jesus Christ is our Master and a model of faith. The Holy Ghost is ready to guide us in all things according to our needs and desires to be happy here on earth. We have living prophets and revelators who guide us through inspiration and divine revelation. God desires that we become self-reliant. ■

NOTES

1. Thomas S. Monson, “Guiding Principles of Personal and Family Welfare,” *Ensign*, Sept. 1986, 3; see also “Let Us Be Self-Reliant and Independent,” *Liahona*, Oct. 2017, 33.
2. Gordon B. Hinckley, “Farewell to a Prophet,” *Ensign*, July 1994, 37.
3. Thomas S. Monson, “Great Expectations” (Church Educational System fireside for young adults, Jan. 11, 2009), 6, speeches.byu.edu.

LOCAL PAGES

A Boat by Any Other Name

By Gina Randall

Self-reliance, I have realised, is a bit of a misnomer. In order to achieve it, you have to be totally reliant—on the Lord. Some examples to support my premise: Nephi building the boat to reach the promised land, Noah building the ark to survive the flood, the Jaredites building the barges to cross the deep. Sea and boats seem to be a theme.

But there are others in our everyday lives. My most memorable one had to do with modesty.

Some years ago, my daughter was invited by her boyfriend (now husband) to attend a very important work event that needed a reasonably formal dress. They went shopping and came back with this very cute but totally immodest dress. This was on a Tuesday, and the function was on the Friday. They had a minor request of me. “Please, adapt this for it to be modest enough for me to wear comfortably,” my daughter asked. Their trusting eyes and faith in me was touching but misplaced. I was effectively a non-sewer.

After succumbing to a panic attack, I figured that I was in the same boat as Nephi had been. Maybe not. I did at least own a good sewing machine. I beseeched the Lord for help, and quickly. I was a working mom, so



I only had a few evenings to perform a miracle.

We found some fabric that could help. This was a strapless dress with a laced-up bodice showing lots of back. Straps were made, a bolero jacket covered bare shoulders, but



the back was still a problem. I managed to fashion an insert to go behind the lacing, and at the end of it, it looked pretty good. We dubbed it the “Minnie Mouse” dress, as the black on red spots reminded us of her. That dress represented a very spiritual experience for me. I prayed at almost every stitch! The Lord gave me inspiration where I had no knowledge and guided my hands every inch of the way. Now I wonder why I didn’t call on more knowledgeable sewing friends. The idea didn’t occur to me. As a result, I had the most tangible experience of relying on the Lord to date.

I suppose a modified dress and a boat are not comparable, but examples of faith and the Lord’s love and interest in our lives are transferable. And that is one of the most important benefits I gain by reading the scriptures. ■

“Ask in Faith, Believing That Ye Shall Receive in the Name of Christ . . .”

By **Elder Gracias Mpiana Tshimanga**

Gécamines First Ward, Kisanga Stake



After I graduated from high school, I pondered the words of the Book of Mormon in Enos 1:15, “Whatsoever thing ye shall ask in faith, believing that ye shall receive in the name of Christ, ye shall receive it.” I called the temple to put my name on the temple prayer roll and continued to pray personally, asking my Heavenly Father to help me find a job that would allow me to save up money to pay for my mission and also to touch the hearts of my family members so that they could be baptized into The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints before I left to start my mission.

My desire was to go on mission in 2017.

First miracle

A few weeks later, Heavenly Father began to answer my prayer. In November 2016, I found a job. It was really difficult at first, but then it became easy. I saved up money to help my mother AND to pay for my mission.

Second miracle

In February 2017, I invited my family to our stake conference, and in April, my mother, one of my sisters, and two nephews were baptized into the Church. What a blessing: four

members of my family baptized within a month!

Third miracle

In September 2017, I received my call to serve a two-year mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo Kinshasa Mission.

Through this experience, my testimony has grown. I know that our Heavenly Father loves all His children, He lives and knows us all individually, and He knows our desires. The Book of Mormon is the word of God—the name of Jesus Christ is quoted 558 times in it, which strengthens my belief that the Book of Mormon is another testament of Christ because I read it. ■

Unnoticed Faith: Understanding Our Different Journeys

By **Brodwyn Von Brughan**

Hillcrest Ward, Hillcrest South Africa Stake

Katlehong 1994

Elder Tyler Dawson and I were asked to reopen the area of Katlehong, south of Johannesburg, in 1994. South Africa was undergoing political and social changes, and it was a period of great uncertainty and violence.

The missionaries had been pulled out of Katlehong for safety reasons a few years before, and we were asked to return and assist the members as possible.

There were some rules though. We lived in a neighborhood outside of our area, and we were not allowed in Katlehong at night, nor were we allowed to walk from home to home; instead, we were only allowed to drive to and from member and investigator homes. We were to phone the police each morning to ask whether it would be safe for us to enter our area. It rarely was safe, and the police would often encourage us to stay away.

Being new to the area, we asked a young man who was the branch president’s son to show us where the members lived. He was reluctant to join us and asked for time to think about it. He later contacted us and agreed to assist us, so we arranged to pick him up from school.

We drove to the agreed spot and he came out from behind a tree, dived in through the back door of the car, and lay down in the footwell. Elder Dawson and I looked at each other

somewhat confused and I offered the front seat so that he could have a better view of where we were driving, but he insisted that he was comfortable. Occasionally he would lift his head and direct us as needed. Sometimes he would join us in a member's home, but at other homes he would stay in the car. We did not press him on this and were just grateful for his help. In this way we got to meet the members of Katlehong. We dropped the young man off at home after a few hours.

I was transferred out of the area but through a series of coincidences happened to pass through a few months later and was able to visit the branch on a Sunday when this young man who had shown us around was giving a talk. I now understand that Heavenly Father wanted me to learn a few things. The young man spoke humbly and sincerely of the experience he had of being asked to show the missionaries around and said that when he was first asked he was very worried because he knew that if he was recognized he could be killed, but he trusted that God would watch over and protect him, and he had faith that he needed to do the Lord's work, and so he had agreed.

I sat in the congregation astonished at what I had heard. For me he had just been a kid with a bad attitude. That day I began to understand what we had really asked of him and the courage it took for him to answer. ■

Obedience: The Key to Turning Our Dreams into Reality

By T. Ruth Randall

How often do you reach the end of the day, look back on it, and say, "There were just enough hours in the day today! There was time to do everything I wanted to, and a little time left to spare!"

If you're like most of us, it's not often. If you're Gracious Shoko from South Africa, it's almost never. On a typical day, she rises at 3:30 a.m. to do her scripture reading, personal

prayers, check her weekly goals, and list what she needs to do by the end of the day. By 6:30 a.m. she's off to drop her two children at school and get to work. After a full day's work and dinner, when most of us would be getting ready to put our feet up, she gets out her sewing machine to sew curtains, duvets, and pillowcases for her part-time business. Around 10 p.m., when many of us would be getting ready for bed, she opens her study books.

Being a parent, working full-time, running a part-time business, and studying part-time simultaneously are "not easy," says Gracious, who has been studying toward a certificate in management accounting for some years. "That's the reason I'm going like a snail in my studies," she says. She alternates late nights with earlier ones so that she can get an adequate amount of rest. "Sometimes I feel so tired that I sleep for an hour when I get home, then I start studying after that," she says. But she keeps at it, and recently wrote an exam that will take her one step closer to completing her qualification.

"It will get rough out there," we read in the self-reliance course under principle three: Be Obedient. "We will all have times when we are



Gracious Shoko

discouraged or overwhelmed, but our Heavenly Father hasn't left us alone in the wilderness. He gave us a lifeline: the Holy Ghost. We can pray for direction, confirmation on our choices, the energy to perform the tasks at hand. But the answers will come only if we are being obedient to the commandments."

Obedience to the commandments can help us develop self-discipline, the self-reliance course teaches. And that ability to "endure to the end" (see 2 Nephi 31), to keep persisting toward a goal despite difficulties, is inherent to success.

The course gives a few practical tips for improving self-discipline, and by extension, our ability to be obedient and therefore succeed.

1. Visualise your motivation.

Why are you choosing to keep this habit? Examples might include that you want to live with your family forever, or be more Christlike. When the going gets tough, it's important to refer back to your greater purpose. Psychologists teach that it helps you deal with stress and stay focused as you encounter difficulties in your task as well.

2. Identify and practice good habits daily. "Behavioral scientists will tell us in order to succeed we need to control the things we can control," says the course.

"This is the art of developing healthy habits: going to bed at a decent hour, rising early and

preparing for the day with scripture reading and prayer, and then organizing your day; being honest; being kind; making time in your schedule to practice good habits daily. As you do, you'll find your self-discipline increasing, making it easier to be obedient."

And Gracious can attest to that. "I read my scriptures during the mornings," she says. This gives her the focus she needs to stay positive.

3. Interview yourself at the end of the day. Identify what you did well and what you need to do better. Gracious does this regularly. She describes this self-interview as "kind of a push, a motivation—like if you talk to someone, and they say something positive, you feel like: 'Oh yes, I will get there.'"

4. Pray. Be grateful for the opportunity to grow. Ask for guidance on important decisions.

"When we have a load, we must just offload it on Him," she says. "I feel like by so doing it gives me that strength to do what I need to, and my load becomes lighter."

As long as she stays obedient, Gracious knows she can achieve her long-term desire of turning her part-time business into a full-time endeavour.

"You just give yourself to the Lord, and then you tell yourself that you're just going to do what is right and you wait for the promises which He has made," she says. "The important thing is having hope—you know that He's not going to let you down." ■

• **WANTED** •

A LATTER-DAY SAINT
WHO IS:

REPENTANT

Share your story and send us your picture on Facebook
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email it to **africasecommunications@gmail.com**.