

Good Afternoon Ladies and Gentlemen.

Before I start my speech, I will like to take this opportunity to thank the University of Ghana for contributing to the person I am today and also for inviting me to deliver the commencement speech. I graduated from this august university with an MBA (Finance) degree sixteen (16) years ago. And that exposure, I believe, helped me transition smoothly into Management. Let me also congratulate all parents and guardians present for the support and guidance you have provided to your children. I know it is not easy, but for pulling through to get them to this level I salute you all.

Now to the graduating class of 2018, Congratulations!

My profile detailed my achievements but did not touch on my full life story. Dr. Kwame Nkrumah once said *“Those who would judge us merely by the heights we have achieved would do well to remember the depths from which we started.”* My father worked as a watchman at an educational institution. Life was very tough for my 9 siblings and I while growing up. But my parents, neither of whom was educated, ensured that all their children went to school. As a matter of fact, I was the first from either my paternal or maternal family to have a degree. Today, seven (7) out of their ten (10) children have a first degree. Education has changed the destiny of my family.

Many years ago, about 33 years, I was also graduating with a BSc Honors degree in Electrical and Electronic Engineering from the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST). Just like you, I was full of hope and expectations about my future. I believed that with hard work I could make it to the top in my professional practice and always remembered the last two lines of William Ernest Henley’s Poem, Invictus, “I am the master of my fate: I am the captain of my soul.” It served as a reminder to me.

Last year, I had the opportunity to be the guest speaker at the congregation of KNUST college of Engineering where my second son was a Graduand of Electrical Engineering. He was following his older brother who had graduated with a BSc in Electrical Engineering three years earlier. I told them the story of the watchman and his small watchmen children. But today I am not going to talk much about the watchman and his children. I am going to tell you what in my opinion could be a guide for your future aspirations.

There are three things I tried to achieve growing up as a young professional which I attribute to my successes today, that I will like you all to consider.

The three principles are, all I do must bring:

1. Honor to Myself
2. Honor to my Family
3. Honor to my Country

Being scientists, you are very smart people (not to say others are not smart). In order to bring honor to yourself, you need to understand that the first few years after graduation are very important to your career path. The first few years are the years I like to call your formation years. This is when you must develop yourself. Graduands, you must start working on yourselves now. Ensure that you keep educating yourself so as to equip you with the necessary skills to meet all challenges that would come your way. This is the time to dream, as dreams are seedlings of reality. Back your dreams with effort. Remember there is no free lunch and you must work hard

to achieve those dreams. You can only fly if you learn to fly. Hard work truly pays and you must dedicate yourself to ensuring that you undertake all little tasks with zeal, determination and utmost commitment. I always attribute my successes during my career to doing the little things very well. Big things are made up of little things and when you do the little things well, you definitely will be doing big things very well.

Antonio Machado once said “Traveler, there is no path. The path is made by walking.” But with the advancement in technology, this old adage is losing its value. Graduands, seize the opportunity to build on what other people are doing and make them better.

Always remember that you will live a fulfilling life if you are honest and disciplined because whatever you have, whatever you own, whatever you do, will be through your hard work. In your daily lives, try to be fair to people you meet along the way because you don't know what tomorrow holds. Just look at today, the watchman's son is now a former chief. A “nobody” can be “somebody” tomorrow. You must be time conscious. African time is an enemy to progress. I don't go to functions late and even at the wedding with my wife, we both arrived at the church 15mins before time.

You owe it a duty to bring honor to your family. Your families have sacrificed a great deal to bring you to this stage, and many of them never got opportunities near to what they have provided for you. Let's make them proud by bringing honor to the family. You need to know that any time you have to take major decisions, you will have to answer the question “will this bring honor or dishonor to my family?” I am always excited that whenever I am mentioned in the news, it is always for a good cause. Always for something that makes my family and loved ones proud. Graduands, I charge you to keep the smiles your family and friends have on, and always remember that your actions will have an impact on them. You must also remember to repay the kindness of the family by also investing in others in the family.

When I started working with the Volta River Authority in 1985, I made sure I supported my family the way I could to also help my brothers and sisters get to where I had reached. And I am always very proud and excited when I hear of their achievements. We must not reach the top and want to stay there alone. Once we get there, we must use the opportunity to carry those behind along with us. As a student at KNUST, I couldn't afford to buy a calculator. One day to my surprise, I got a parcel from a catholic priest, Monsignor Roger Aboteyuure and when I opened the parcel it was a calculator. When I graduated and started working, I was sent to the Pennsylvania State University in the United States of America for training in Advanced Power Systems. Out of my per diem, I bought 5 calculators and sent them to Monsignor to be given to needy students. Let's show love to our family, to the community and make sacrifices for the common good of people. Pope Francis summarizes this by saying

*“It is worthwhile to live as a family,
that a society grows strong, grows in goodness,
grows in beauty and truly grows if it is built on the foundation of the family.”*

Thirdly, let's bring honor to our dear country, Ghana. I have one policy and that is, wherever you find yourself, try to make the place better than you found it. You must be a servant of the land. I

am always proud to have been the Lead Commissioning Engineer of the Northern Electrification and System Reinforcement Project which extended electricity from the southern part of the country to the Brong Ahafo Region and the three northern regions. When I started working with the Volta River Authority, less than 25% of Ghanaians had access to electricity. Today outside South Africa, Ghana has the highest electricity access rate of 85%, making us a leader in Africa, south of the Sahara, where the sub-regional average is less than 35%.

We must seek to make life more comfortable for future generations. As a student at the Navrongo Secondary School, we used lanterns to learn. We had no electricity. You can imagine how excited I was the day I commissioned the Navrongo substation and we switched on grid power to Navrongo. I breathed in an air of achievement. I knew the impact of that small action on the lives of the children in Navrongo. Electricity is a catalyst to development, so I have dedicated my life to ensuring that every place in Ghana has electricity. That is my way of bringing honor to my country. I will urge you Graduands, to find what you love, what you are good at, and use that to bring honor to our country. Winston Churchill says “ You make a living by what you get. You make a life by what you give”

Finally, I will urge you to believe in God and remember that every step along the way, God speaks to you. Sonnie Badu says in my favorite song, My Soul Says Yes,

“Where you lead me, I follow

When you call me, I will answer

Oh my Lord please teach me how to know Your Way”

Let God lead you and make sure you listen to him.

Graduands,

In you we find people who can help increase yields from our fields

In you we find people who will help preserve our environment

In you we find people who will bring about development to our country

In you we find hope

Graduands

Go bring honor to yourself, your family and our dear country!

Go bring honor to humanity!

Mother Theresa of Calcutta said “Yesterday is gone. Tomorrow has not yet come. We have only today. Let us begin.” Just remember that the journey has just started and you are the master of your fate and the captain of your soul.

,

THANK YOU AND MAY GOD BLESS US ALL