

**SPEECH DELIVERED AT THE JULY 2019 CONGREGATION OF THE  
UNIVERSITY OF GHANA**

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Alumni and Friends of the University  
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen  
Graduands

Words fail me to describe how I feel, to be standing before you as the guest speaker, on the occasion of such huge milestones in the lives of the graduands, parents, faculty, and the distinguished invited guests gathered here today. I never saw this coming and I am very grateful to the University of Ghana for giving me such an honour. However the task given me is also my challenge, and I have been thinking of what to tell this congregation since it was confirmed I will be speaking. To be honest, I do not remember what the guest speaker said during my graduation some 17 years ago, and therein lies my challenge, to say a few words that would resonate with you as you finally step out of this great institution as a graduate, words that I sincerely hope would inspire some of you, would engender belief in others and as well as give the needed oomph to face the challenges that will come your way.

I do hope the lessons from my experiences, these past years would help give you some guidance as you consider what life will throw at you as step out into the world.

**You are responsible for your own success** – it does not matter what success means to you, but however you define success, from now on, you cannot blame anyone for your future or for how you end up. You have achieved what most struggle for, you have attained what many are still home striving and praying to have – a university degree. This should be your launching pad to success, you can be anything you want to be from now on. Your minds have been opened, you have gained some knowledge – its now time to explore the world. Do not be boxed in the degree you are graduating in, learn more, continuously develop yourself, learn a trade, read a book, by all means do something with your life, never waste a day. Have a mentor to guide you, build networks of good people who can influence your life, people who can call you and say to you, stop that and you stop.

**Have a purpose** – You must have an aim by now, you should know what you want to be by now. Its sad when you meet a graduate looking for a job, and they tell you I can do anything. I don't believe it's the right attitude – you must have a target career or occupation, and all your do from now on is just to attain that. You might not get there straight away, but you know you are on a journey towards that. If you do not know where you are going, you may enter into any car at the lorry station – when that happens, you destination is in the hands of the driver, he takes you where he is going, not where you want to go. You must drive your own lifes career, do not let anyone decide this for you. **You must be the driver of your destiny. You must have something that makes you wake up every morning.**

**Let no one who says it cannot be done stop you from doing it. Believe in yourself.**

**Do not compare yourself to others.** Yes you are all graduating together, yes you may all have sat in the same class, you may all be first class students...but you are not the same. In a few years time you may meet some mates, some doing well, and you may look at yourself, and maybe you haven't gotten to where you want to be. Our paths to greatness or success are not the same, discover your path, work hard towards it, when friends are successful be happy for them, but never let someone else's success make you look down on yourself. The fact is someone wishes they were where you are. Keep your focus, believe in yourself, as long as you are on your track to greatness, never waver.

**Do not look for money – seek to provide value.** There are many graduates who set their minds on making money, from my experience those who only want money settle for any job that gives them money, in the end they are not fulfilled. The truth is money does not lead to ultimate satisfaction. When you create value for an organization, they reciprocate by rewarding you, especially in doing what you love to do, you become more fulfilled. Sometimes you actually have companies fighting for you, because you deliver value they cherish and are willing to pay for.

Remember you are not a finished product, do not overrate yourself, be humble, ready to learn, to be someone's apprentice, to learn the ropes of the job, this builds you up for when you have a bigger role.

**Be honest** – integrity and good character has great reward. There are so many people looking to cut corners, looking for the short cuts, cutting deals with suppliers and vendors, etc, but all these people never get to bed to rest, they actually sleep with an eye opened. There is nothing better than the feeling of having worked honestly and being paid for it. Companies these days also reward honesty. Be a worker who gets to the office on time, actually works, not just shows up.

When you work, do your best work. There are many people walking around today, who have worked many years but still very unfulfilled, they go to work because they have to, not because they love what they do. They do not give their best, thinking it's not for them, they do not help to create a company culture they enjoy, they are not missed when they do not come to work.

You are ambassadors of UG, we will not like to hear of any of you on the front page of the news papers, having done something wayward. We hear of all the things happening in our country, I pray that you will be the generation that takes us out of the woods to be like the countries we wish Ghana was.

**You will fail a few times** but you know what, failing does not make you a failure, it is when you believe you are a failure – that is when you fail. When you repeat the same mistake, that is when you are a failure. What I will tell you is to fail fast, by that I mean when you fail, learn from it and move on. The experience you gain from failure is worth much more than what any lecture or training programme gives you. Tell yourself, this is not failure, I found a way on how not to do it, and have a go again. You may attend an interview, they will make you feel useless...but do you come out telling yourself you are useless? No way – you go back, correct your mistakes, put in another application elsewhere, you go with a lesson on how not to do it, and you do better. Have a growth mindset – everything is possible with a lot of practice.

**Never be afraid to start low** – You will not get what you aim at straight away, some may get it, others may not. As I said in the beginning, the main thing is to start off with a purpose, a goal. As long as you do not lose sight of the goal, it doesn't matter where life takes you, it doesn't matter the disappointments that comes your way, you still hold on to that vision, that dream of becoming the next big thing in Ghana. Sometimes this will mean taking a low grade job, sometimes this might mean taking a pay cut, or even moving to an area you think does not offer much – I tell you, I have been through all that. But in those moments, my decisions were based on what that path could lead me to. Life, or the path to success is not a straight course, there will be dips, lows and highs, happy times and sad times, but look at the bigger picture, ask yourself – will this low paying job lead me to my dream job? Will this path ultimately lead me to the dream?

**Be innovators/Take the initiative** – You are in an age where almost everything is possible. Technology has made things easy and better, you have the world in your hands, you are able to connect with anyone anywhere in the world – take advantage of these opportunities. Think and dream. No one will give you lecture notes again, you have to find the ways yourself. Have a world view of issues, your competition is not only against Ghanaians, but the world, you must be at your best to compete. Be a continuous learner.

**Love God, Honour your parents** – I believe strongly in all the things I have shared, but I also know, without God I wouldn't be where I am today. There are people who have come my way, favours I have received, that I can only explain as the doing of the Lord. I do not believe in chance – I believe in the grace of God. When God's hand is upon you, it doesn't matter how long you stay in the wilderness, He will bring you to the promised land. The horse is prepared for the day of battle, but victory is of the Lord – trust in God for every aspect of your life.

I also want to say, do not neglect your parents, no matter how far you go in life, continue to honour them, had it not been for them, you may not have been here today, being awarded an honours degree. Seek their blessings in the major decisions of your life, respect them and you will never regret it.

I will like to bring my talk to an end by charging you all with a quote I saw...

“Cowardice asks the question - is it safe? Expediency asks the question - is it politic? Vanity asks the question - is it popular? But conscience asks the question - is it right? And there comes a time when one must take a position that is neither safe, nor politic, nor popular; but one must take it BECAUSE it is right” Martin Luther King.

Be upstanders, not bystanders, be problem solvers not complainers, speak against evil, be the best you can be, be nice to all you meet, work to make our country, Africa and the world better than it is. You will make yourself proud, make your parents proud and the world would be better for it - because YOU passed through. God richly bless you all.