

**SPEECH DELIVERED BY DR. JOSEPH KWADWO ASENSO, GUEST SPEAKER,  
ON THE OCCASION OF THE GRADUATION CEREMONY OF THE  
UNIVERSITY OF GHANA (COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES)  
ON SATURDAY, 18<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER, 2017, AT 8AM**

Acting Chairman of the University Council

Vice Chancellor

Pro-Vice Chancellors

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Members of Advisory Board of the College of Humanities

Members of Convocation

Hon. Ministers of State

Your Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic Corps

Alumni and Friends of the University

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen

**Introduction**

I deem it a great honour to have been invited as Guest Speaker for the November 2017 Graduation Ceremony of the College of Humanities.

Let me start off by congratulating the graduating class of 2017 for successfully completing their studies at this august institution of learning. Indeed, this is no mean achievement considering the busy academic schedule and the tension associated with the examination week. It would NOT be out of place to say Ayekoo to these hardworking students and, with your permission, may I humbly request that we show appreciation for their effort with a round of applause. (Thank you very much).

Ladies and Gentlemen, it seems as if it was only a few years ago when I first stepped foot on this campus in August 1998 as a freshman – almost 20 years ago. It is an experience I will forever cherish due to the friends I made, the lessons I learnt and the

academic experience I attained. To date, I am still in touch with some of the friends I graduated with in 2002 and later, in 2005. It is my hope that we will not abrogate friendships nurtured here with time for it is some of these same people that we will encounter later in life.

### **Purpose in Life**

Ladies and Gentlemen, every once in a while, we all ask ourselves about our purpose here on earth. Here are some of the questions that agitate our minds:

- does my life count for anything?
- how am I going to discover what I was meant to be?
- what will it take to achieve my purpose here on earth, amongst others?

These questions become exceedingly loud in our minds, especially when we are going through a difficult patch in life – experiencing failure, disappointment, uncertainty, heartbreak, the loss of a loved one, etc.

Acting Chairman of the University Council, our background and upbringing influence how we handle such issues. Many people in our part of our world wake up in the morning not knowing where their lunch is going to come from. Many people and, I imagine there are a good number of them here, struggle to raise their fees and sustenance allowance. I reckon that some of these folks are asking themselves about “how they managed to get to this point”. Regardless of your path to this point, the journey is not yet over.

Some of you are going to have your first real job from here. You are going to learn how to earn a living from your own sweat or if this is ‘bread and butter’ for you, you are going to have to continue with business as usual in order to stay afloat.

Ladies and Gentlemen, life outside the university is a lot more complex. You may have to deal with about a thousand and one things within the space of a second sometimes – the challenges of raising a family, taking care of parents and siblings on a meagre starting salary, getting the bills paid, dealing with that difficult boss, delivering assignments on

schedule, the hassle of commuting to work, dealing with that troublesome landlord and/or co-tenant, and what have you.

If you don't take care, you could lose yourself in the process but you have got to remember that you have had some training for all these things – dealing with an annoying roommate or course mate, helping to solve that little misunderstanding on the floor of your hostel/hall of residence, working with others to complete assignments and to prepare for examinations.

Distinguished Graduands, there isn't a challenge out there that you cannot overcome if you put your mind to it. It is said that "life is all about solving problems". If you are a Christian, the Bible tells you that there is no temptation that is beyond you and, I am sure there are similar encouraging tag lines in the scriptures of the other religions as well. You must make a determination to never give up no matter how dire the situation is.

For most of you, the major challenge is finding a job after your National Service. It is one challenge that a lot more people can identify with. You have got to tell yourself that you will not be the first person to search for a job and you will not be the last either. I wrote countless job applications after my MPhil programme to several institutions, including places I never wanted to work at. However, I told myself that if I had to fail, I had to fail trying.

It is frustrating to write job application letters and not receive any feedback at all. But who can you blame? Many of these institutions receive hundreds, if not thousands of applications every week. It is even more frustrating to wake up in the morning to see your contemporaries hastening to beat the traffic to the office and you feeling as though you have nothing to contribute.

However, if there is any one thing you must remember, it is that you should never ever give up!!! It is said that quitters never win. You must press on until you find fulfilment. Set yourself up by volunteering and make it a habit of not making money the main motivation for any productive activity you engage yourself in. When people see the quality inside of you, they will crave it and reward you for it. There is always something you can

do to occupy you – let it be positive and productive. Brooding over your precarious unemployment situation will not change anything but taking a firm step to making yourself employable will.

Acting Chairman of the University Council, at this juncture, please permit me to share a few perspectives with the graduands. These are lessons I have learnt from my own personal experiences and from those close to me.

1. Make a mark: Do not be content with being an also-run. Make a conscious effort to be known for something. You can start by making a mark on the people around you. If you want to be sure of what you stand for, ask the people in your immediate surroundings;
2. Honesty pays: Depravity has taken over our society and it is little wonder that trust has become so expensive a word. Be honest in all your ways for when you least expect it, somebody will be watching and they will call you out someday;
3. Be humble enough to learn but be confident enough to speak up: You should not keep quiet, especially when you have useful suggestions that could improve situations and change lives. Learn all that you can but make yourself heard as well;
4. Hard work pays: Do not take the easy route up. Be known as a hard worker and one who does not compromise on quality and you shall receive your reward in due course. Cutting corners will only expose you to shame;
5. Make the right connections the right way: Everybody has received one favour or the other in their lifetime. Make the right connections the right way but you must remember that your connections can get you there but non-performance will bring you back;

6. Give yourself to society: Do not be overly inward-looking. It is good to take care of yourself and your family but make a conscious effort to take care of others. Nothing is more gratifying than when someone says “thank you” because you spoke an encouraging word to them, helped to pay their fees or hospital bills or helped when they were in dire straits;
7. Aim high but you can start small: We all have dreams and aspirations in life – raising a happy family in a decent house, having your name shouted at the rooftops, building that blue chip business which solves the everyday problem or being seen by everyone as a successful person in every sense of the word. These are good but you can start by working for someone or start your business in the garage or bedroom. A lot of businesses have collapsed because they punched above their weight by buying and branding cars and renting offices at high-end addresses when they could barely afford it;
8. Be in your lane: It is good to admire and be inspired by successful people but remember that you are not them. Your path to success may be different to theirs and, as you set out, promise yourself to take what belongs to you and work towards expanding your share rather than getting ahead of yourself to do things which can only get you into trouble, all in a bid to be like someone else;
9. Do not let your horizon be determined by your immediate environment: It is not about the type of family you come from or the school you attended. It is all about you – how you see yourself, what you want to do and what your ambitions are. There are quite a number of successful people who came from humble backgrounds;
10. Godliness: All good and perfect gifts come from above, they come from the Father of light in whom there is no waiver of doubt. Physical training is of some value but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come (I Timothy 4:8). In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will

direct your path. Do not be haughty when you attain a certain level of success. Remember, we are only stewards of what He has given us.

## **Conclusion**

Acting Chairman of the University Council, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me conclude by encouraging our graduands to never give up in the face of adversity. Please, live your life but you must live for something and your life must count for something.

Thank you and God bless you.