

UGANDA CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY

ANNUAL ANTI-CORRUPTION WEEK

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PAPER PRESENTED TO SUPPORT STAFF

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Theme:

“Towards a more strategic partnership in the fight against corruption in Uganda”. Guided by the Scriptures (Proverbs 29:2) – “When the righteous increase, the people rejoice, but when the wicked rule, the people groan.”

Topic:

“Working against corruption tendencies; a personal responsibility for Christians or individual responsibility? (“Okulwanyisa obuli bwenguzi, buvunanyizibwa bwani ani?”)

Introduction

Before we talk of fighting corruption we must first know what it is and what it is capable of doing to us as individuals and our society, so that we can seek for ways of working together against it. First of all corruption is a silent and slow but sure mover. It begins with small words, small actions and sometimes with small people; in small places and utilizing small occasions with little pressure. As it gains ground on an individual, it begins to creep towards bigger people and places, this time using bigger words and actions until it infects others and their workplaces. The biblical ethical dilemma expressed in Pro.29:2 about corruption seems to be accusing leaders and exonerating the subjects, but corruption is inherent in all of us with the potential to destroy character, not only of the corrupt individual but also of the person it is aimed at, and will only surface when opportunities come. It is therefore a cross cutting vice. So what is corruption?

Definition

Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) defines corruption as,

- (i) “the misuse of Public power for private benefits.”

(ii) Dishonest or fraudulent conduct by those in power, typically involving bribery.¹

But we can add that it is; Perversion, Deviation and misuse of what has been entrusted to us in Public interest for Private benefits.

It may involve those in power who dishonestly, fraudulently and typically get involved in bribery. It is a process by which a word or expression changes from its original state to one regarded as erroneous or debased.²

In general, corruption is a form of dishonesty or criminal activity undertaken by a person or organization entrusted with a position of authority, often to acquire illicit benefits (whether knowingly or unknowingly) Wikipedia.

Corruption may be in form of:

- Bribery to gain personal benefits; Eccl.7:7
- To win an election or an office
- To go through an interview
- Bribery to win a case
- To get an opportunity of service before others can do so on the expense of their integrity e.g. jumping a queue.
- Laundering or hoarding money
- Telling lies to gain acceptance
- Employing relatives in spite of their poor qualifications
- Taking advantage of weak people
- Promoting those who pay something
- Give scholarships for payment.³

Biblically corruption is a vice that is inherent and has the potential to destroy individuals, families, societies/institutions and nations c.f. Gen.6:11-12; “The earth was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt: for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth”.

“Corruption is willfully hidden, it is impossible to measure directly... a difficult phenomenon.”⁴
It cannot be easily identified until it has manifested itself in what we do or say. It must be noted that corruption covers a wide range of vices largely manifested in actions and words and is

¹Transparency International (2017). *“Corruption Perception Index”*. Retrieved from the original of August 14, 2017 and accessed November 18, 2018.

²Transparency International. (2017)

³ Chinua Achebe, *No longer at Ease*, (Kampala: East African Publishers Ltd, 1996)pp.17-18

⁴ Michael A. Seligson, *“The impact of Corruption on Regime Legitimacy: A Comparative Study of Four Latin American Countries.”* Journal of Politics (2002):408-433

mostly deeply seated in the human heart (Jer.17:9). In their book; *How now Shall We live?*, Charles and Nancy assert that “The real problem with this world is not deformity of the body; its deformity in the soul. In a word, it is sin. Anyone who harbors an idealistic urge to improve the human race ought to look not to engines but to means for healing the sinful heart.”⁵ Whereas policies and changing systems might be important in improving workplace values, Colson and Pearcey are saying that dealing with the change of heart should be the primary goal to fight corruption. This is enough to tell us that all people have got the potential to corruption, however, the degree varies. In a number of instances people grow without actively showing their inclination to this vice in public not until they are either very rich or influential (powerful people like leaders), but also when sometimes they become poor. There are also tendencies when we blong to non of these domains but we become influenced by the workplaces where we spend most of our time every day of the year. The three domains above are the major frontiers of corruption the world over. There are people and organizations that have made corruption their way of life; namely Police, Judiciary, Politicians, taxation bodies, business people, academia to mention but a few. What you want determines what you will do rightly or wrongly. The Christian moral ethics demand that “we must be holy as God is holy” (1Pet.1:16). We cannot serve a Holy God and be corrupt at the same time.

Why is corruption a complicated and incomprehensible vice?

Corruption cannot be treated as a private matter since corrupt individuals live and work within communities. Sometimes corruption is a syndicated⁶ crime. In the process of sharing life and work values, individuals who have got high degree of corruption will no doubt influence those around them and they will end up coordinating and working together locally or internationally. Our work places are highly corruption prone that it is sometimes very difficult to avoid being influenced or affected. Besides having inborn tendencies, on the other hand it can be acquired especially from where we live and work. The Runyankole- Rukiga (Runyakitara) proverb says: “Embuzi mbi tosi bika ho yaawe”. Literally meaning that: “Close to a badly behaved goat, you do not tie yours”. Because in a long run it will be influenced and begin to misbehave. In most of our work paces it is very easy for people to become corrupt because of those they work with who are corrupt. The question is: who is your neighbor or workmate? What is the culture of your workplace? When we live seeing what is being done and hearing what are being said, we begin to believe that it is the acceptable way of life. Left to ourselves, we will exercise the same without knowing the good and bad effects of what we are doing against ourselves and the society around us.

⁵ Charles Colson and Nancy Pearcey, *How Now Shall we Live?* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers,1999)p.142-3

⁶ E.L. Thorndike and Clarence L. Barnhart, *Intermediate Dictionary*, (Glenview, Illinois: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1983)P.923

Recently, the Chief Justice of Uganda decried the increasing corrupt tendencies in the country, which could engulf the society if not dealt with, and he sighted teachers who were caught selling exams⁷. That was one isolated case, but we know that corruption has eaten up the moral fiber of Ugandans. We may not see it as an issue but remember this is a serious matter. It affects pupils, students and parents in a financial crisis environment. Parents were buying exams in order to have their children pass. That tells us that the parents are already corrupt and they are passing it on to their children who will grow knowing that to pass examination you must cheat. This will go on even at the point of getting employment. If you are a leader and you have corrupt tendencies, people around you especially juniors will know that corruption is an acceptable practice, and each of them will find his or her level, but still it will remain corruption.

Scriptures tell us clearly that all of us have got that, “original sin” - It is that sin that runs through us and activating the dormant tendencies of corruption. One Scholar by the name of Plato; a Greek Philosopher said: “An idea is more real than the object”⁸. Using this analogy, we can say that “corruption tendencies” are ideas and thoughts living within us. They are real but hidden in us. They will only become visible when they are turned into actions and words. It is more real in our minds than in what we do. By the time someone bribes or is bribed, it is not the beginning. It is rather the fulfillment of the ideas that have been suppressed over time. We can destroy the works of corruption but difficult to destroy the ideas. For example covetousness is a feeling or are thoughts that can hardly be seen in an individual. It can be suppressed for long until the opportunity strikes and the real man in you surfaces. I am of the belief that there is only one way to overcome corruption and that is by getting spiritual resources that can help us transform our thinking (ideas). Romans 12:2. Tells us about the transformation of our thinking. Dealing with corruption is more of a heart and head matter than the works of our hands. The law speaks out clearly and often times culprits once caught are punished heavily as a deterrent to those who are doing it but not yet discovered. Yet corruption every year seem to be rising higher and higher. People have become more and more fear free, shameless, immune and criminals in spite of the law and punishments.

However, working within a Christian setting (like Uganda Christian University) is an opportunity for us to improve our working behaviors. We are quite aware that much as it is a Christian based institution; there are many corrupt vices that have been affecting our integrity within and without. Although corruption has been generalized as to do with funds, there are other corrupt tendencies in our workplaces where many of us might have nothing to do with funds but with material things and people. We are influenced by other workplace behaviors. These may include:

⁷ New Vision, Monday, October 15, 2018, p.6

⁸ As quoted in Understanding Ethics from a Christian perspective; A UCU Foundation Course Study Guide, edition 2011, p.33

- (i) Cheating time
- (ii) Cheating work load
- (iii) Stealing stores
- (iv) Cheating payment
- (v) Telling lies etc.

These adversely affect the engine of productivity as they undermine our working integrity or spirituality of work. We must know and be reminded that work is spiritual because it is a service to God, and therefore any corrupt tendencies destroy our roles as God's stewards.

What can we do then?

In a bid to create a corruption free environment, Uganda Christian University has Five (5) important "core values" that can help us live a corrupt free life and are meant to speak to us as individuals in order to achieve our Vision and Mission as an institution. These are: **Christ-centeredness**; **Diligence**; **Integrity**; **Servant hood** and **Stewardship**. Unless we meet the requirements of these values as individuals, the institution we are serving will not realize its Vision and Mission. This tells us that we have responsibility as individuals but also as a team to check on the corruption tendencies creeping slowly but surely ready to destroy our personalities and institution.

You are called or categorized "Support Staff"; you are the people who are behind the success of this organization, to keep it running and to support the people who are involved in the organization's main agenda. If you decided to fail the institution you will ably do it, if you decide to promote it you will also do it because your spirituality of work is central in building the anti-corruption chain within and out. It does not matter which section you work under and who heads that section, all we must know is that we are an integral part of one another. Our responses to the University core values will be the drive behind fighting corruption. There is always a tendency in most of the work places for workers to corrupt their leaders for favors or leaders corrupting their workers for personal gains. Recently you heard about whistle blowers at the Dinning.⁹ We had many incidences of corruption uncovered at the Maingate, in faculty offices, bursar's offices, human resource offices and almost every where on this campus, and yet we are a Christian institution. At what point do you blow the whistle? Let me tell you this; when you are a beneficiary of any corrupt scheme, you may not or never blow the whistle but when you are betrayed in the scheme where you intended to benefit, you will blow the whistle not because you did not like the scheme, only because you have been betrayed. However, the true whistle blower is that one whose heart hates corruption and corrupt people. Some people tend to keep silent when they think that what has happened or is happening does not concern

⁹ The Standard dated October 8-25, 2018 Vol.19 No. 15, p.4

them. In an institution where we work for the common good of everyone, corruption affects all and destroys all. When we work as support staff, we work to support one another and for the good of the institution but not individuals. Therefore we need to note that any negative or corrupt tendencies at our work places will in one way or the other affect us as individuals but also as an institution. ***“One part of the forest burning does not rule out that the other will not burn later or any time.”*** This tells us that when you see or hear someone corrupt, don’t shrug your shoulders as if it does not concern you or as though you are incorruptible. It may be you next (1Cor.10:12). There are leaders who find the practice of spirituality in their workplaces a hindrance to their corrupt schemes and will try as much as they can to keep those who are spiritual out of their workplaces lest they interfere with their schemes.

It is a personal responsibility to raise a figure when you realize that there are; social, spiritual, economic or political injustices caused by corrupt people. Where you work, God might have placed you there for a purpose which you have to fulfill (Ezek.33:1-7). You have a responsibility at your work place as a watchman besides what has been assigned to you. One of the important things you must know is that your work place is God’s mission field where the “seeds of spirituality are sown and harvested” in and through you. If it be true that your workplace is God’s mission field, then you are the missionary to your workplace and work mates. Whistle blowers are not enemies to fellow workers, but rather are **messengers of anti-corruption**, provided they do it genuinely. Do not wait to make a public whistle blow, but rather act as you workmates spiritual helper by counseling him or her before things get worse. The more you become concerned against corruption, the more you save individuals and your institution from collapsing spiritually and physically.

Corruption is an evil which seems to have had no treatment since the fall of man. However for those who care, treatment is available through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. When Jesus Christ is allowed to work with, in and through us, we get the heart to understand and the eyes to see that there is a problem to be corrected and that is where one of the core values becomes emphasized: **“Christ centeredness”**.

Note that where there are people, work and workers or institutions, corruption thrives- because it is one of the primary vices that seek self- gratification in form of status, financial levels, authority/power etc. No matter what others get or lose, as long as the self is satisfied, the heart is convincingly happy.

Fighting corruption

- To fight corruption; “(you) can not sit idly by waiting for the world to change, each of us must be part of that transformation.” – Ana Garrido Ramos.
- Set yourself apart. Do not condon bad practices but rather condemn them

- Work for the good of all not yourself as an individual
- Stop listening to yourself but instead listen to the voice of Jesus Christ
- Rebuke, reproach and teach yourself before you can do it for others
- Seek for spiritual resources to transform your thinking and actions
- Always seek what is good for all
- Be sensitive to vices that will destroy you, your work and workmate, and the institution