

Dealing with Bribery and Corruption – Elisama Daniel

Corruption is referred to as the use of one's public position for illegitimate private gains.¹ It is the use of power to do dishonest or illegal things in return for money, or to get an advantage.² Corrupt behaviour is behaviour that is dishonest, illegal or immoral, which negatively affects the norms of society. Corruption is the abuse or misuse of power, authority, position or resources entrusted to somebody. Corruption takes what is for public benefit and instead uses it for personal gain. It may benefit one person or support many cronies. Corruption is a racket – an illegal activity that makes hidden money. It is dishonest or illegal behaviour by powerful people.³ Such people abuse their power. Corrupt people lack integrity, are morally depraved, dishonest and disloyal except to themselves.⁴

In Sudan many of our community values do not permit corruption or stealing. In some communities a thief, a corrupt person or family, is stigmatised. Songs are composed to demonise such acts. At the same time and by the same people however, any public property or other resources belonging to the government (and hence to the people) are considered as things that can be legitimately plundered and scooped!

During colonial times, "government" *hakumat* was perceived as belonging to the colonialists *khawaja*. Post-colonially after independence "government" was not only the *khawaja*, but also the Arabs or the Khartoum regime. Southern Sudan especially viewed it this way. Among the Nuers of Southern Sudan "government" or *hakumat* refers to a small group of clever and powerful people who protect themselves by arms while exploiting and using the resources of those they see as the foolish majority.

¹ Anwar Shah, Performance Accountability and Combating Corruption (World Bank Publications) 2007, p.308.

² Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary 6th Edition, quoted in Economic and Financial Crimes Commission and National Development by Babatunde Ogala, Guardian Newspaper England, April 27th 2008.

³ Macmillan School Dictionary (Oxford: Macmillan) 2004.

⁴ English Dictionary (Glasgow: Harper Collins) 1995.

Please read thoughtfully through the following list. It is easy to criticise other people while overlooking things hidden in your own life. It is easy to skip some things while focusing on others.⁵

Corruption means:

- Bribery⁶ and the bribing of agents
- Giving secret inducements for advice or for service
- Deceiving the principal (the employer)
- Refusing to report or denying an act of corruption (to cover up or protect)
- Conflict of interest: Somebody defined this type of corruption in two forms; one as **productive corruption** where you award a contract to your own company, your spouse or close relatives, and the work gets done. Awarding the same contract to the same persons but the work is never done is referred to as **malignant corruption**. One cleaner form of corruption in the conflict of interests is the so-called “kick-backs”. Here the contractor owes a certain percentage of his remuneration to those people who awarded the contract
- Improper benefits to board members, to trustees or employers, in return for making an appointment or passing a decision
- Bid rigging, facilitating procurements or contracts in order to be rewarded
- Abuse of office, power or authority; causing administrative malpractice

⁵ Matthew 7:1-5.

⁶ Bribery is a form of corruption expressed in the giving or receiving of something that is not deserved. Money or a gift is given to alter the behaviour of the recipient in ways not consistent with the duties of that person. It may be in breach of law in which case bribery constitutes a crime.

Different social and cultural norms surround bribery. Expectations of when a monetary transaction is appropriate can differ from place to place. Tipping for a job well done is considered bribery in some societies, while in others that merely rewards good service (after the event). The bribery offence may be divided into two great classes: the one, where a person invested with power is induced by payment to use it unjustly; the other, where power is obtained by purchasing the services of those who can make things happen (before the event).

Bribery may also take the form of a secret commission, a profit made by an agent in the course of his employment without the knowledge of his employer. Bribery has many other names including a consideration, a sweetener, a kick-back, etc. All will be secret, not declared to the higher authorities. Bribers all have one thing in common and that is the financial ability to pay. Therefore it always abuses the poor. (adapted from Wikipedia).

- Dealing with suspect property
- Fraud
- Embezzlement or the misappropriation of public funds
- Graft
- Breach of trust
- False witness; false reporting especially on your income, assets and liabilities if you are requested by the relevant authorities
- Dishonesty over liability for taxes
- Failure to pay taxes, fees, levies or charges payable to public bodies
- Effecting or obtaining non-payment of taxes, levies, fees or charges to any public body to which they are payable
- Election of persons to public office by false process
- Unlawful acquisition, mortgage, and disposal of public property, service or benefit
- Damage to public property
- Fraudulently making payment or excessive payment from public revenues for substandard or defective goods, goods not supplied or not supplied in full, or services not rendered or not adequately rendered.
- Failure to comply with applicable procedures and guidelines for procurement, allocation, sale or disposal of property; in the tendering of contracts; or failure to follow procedures in the management of public or organisational funds, including when incurring expenditures.

Bribery can be active – the person giving, or passive – the person receiving. Bribery is a form of corruption that is expressed in the giving or receiving of something that is not deserved.

Once I was coming from Nairobi, Kenya, at the Jomo Kenyatta International airport. A policeman helped push my trolley and took me to the check in desk. Later he helped me with

immigration. I however, made myself known to him. He asked if giving a gift to a policeman was bad? I told him that any gift given with an intention to influence a decision or to cause an action in favour of the giver, constitutes a corrupt act or bribery.

Principles for facing corrupt systems or people in life situations

1. Resolve never to defile yourself or to spoil your Christian testimony

Daniel 1:8-9; Matthew 16:24-25; James 1:27.

2. Always consider what the other people involved are going to think of the Jesus you show them by what you are doing

1 Corinthians 10:32-33 to 11:1; 1 John 2:9-11.

3. Live in the light. Avoid doing things you'd rather hide

Luke 11:33-35; Romans 13:12.

4. Be different from those around you and show you are a Christian disciple

Romans 12:2; 2 Corinthians 5:17.

5. Influence the world around you rather than let it influence you

Matthew 5:13-16; Hebrews 6:10-12.

6. Be bold in the faith God gives you

Acts 4:13; Acts 4:18-19.

7. Follow what is best for your Christian spirit, not necessarily what is best for your body

1 Peter 2:11-12; Matthew 10:17-20.

8. Always be honest

Proverbs 16:13; Proverbs 16:19; Proverbs 16:25.

9. Choose against the promises that a bribe may appear to offer you

Exodus 23:8; Deuteronomy 16:19; Proverbs 17:8; Proverbs 17:23;

Proverbs 18:16; Proverbs 19:6; Proverbs 21:14.

Remember to live by Proverbs 15:27.

Discussion guide

Using this chapter and Scriptures quoted:

1. What goes through your mind when you are faced with either offering a bribe to someone or being frustrated in what you are trying to do?

Does the fact you are a Christian make a difference to how you feel?

2. Corruption in humankind was one of the reasons God destroyed, using the flood, Genesis 6:5-13. God viewed the Israelites' "golden calf" as their corruption, Exodus 32:7-10. Throughout the Old Testament God is against corruption of any sort in His people, for example: Ezekiel 20:43-44.

If our society tolerates any degree of corruption, but our God does not, what should we do? Why? Give examples if you can.

3. The Hebrew word *sahat* to corrupt also means to destroy.⁷

What is destroyed in any society that allows bribery and corruption?

4. Why is it easier to see corruption in anonymous "other people" (for example "the government" or "those local officials" or "the contractors") and not in yourself or your friends?

How can this be overcome? Be practical with your ideas.

5. Explain the importance of keeping all transactions public – with no secrecy.

Why are bribes, inducements, kick-backs, favour payments, etc. paid secretly?

6. "A greedy man brings trouble to his family, but he who hates bribes will live", Proverbs 15:27.

Why is this a good verse to live by?

Is it easy to do so, or is it hard? Why?

Which Bible verses or Bible characters help you to live successfully in God's sight?

7. What do 1 Corinthians 10:32-33 and 11:1 tell you about

(a) other people watching how you live?

(b) selfishness and selflessness?

8. Read John 3:19-21. Explain why Christians should live openly and not secretly in matters such

⁷ W.E.Vine Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament words (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson) 1996, p.59.

as business deals, education achievements, obtaining official documents, etc.