

CERTIFICATE ECDE C.R.E NOTES

OBJECTIVES

- a) **Discuss Gods purpose and process of creation**
- b) **Analyse biblical stories to enhance childrens moral and spiritual development.**
- c) **Describe the life of Jesus and his qualities of work.**
- d) **Explain the types of Christian worship.**
- e) **Identify Christian religious heritage and practices.**
- f) **Describe methods of teaching CRE**
- g) **Develop materials for teaching CRE to an ECDE child.**
- h) **Construct an assessment tool for evaluating CRE tools and children.**

Process of Creation

- **Day 1** - God created light and separated the light from the darkness, calling light "day" and darkness "night."
- **Day 2** - God created an expanse to separate the waters and called it "sky."
- **Day 3** - God created the dry ground and gathered the waters, calling the dry ground "land," and the gathered waters "seas." On day three, God also created vegetation (plants and trees).
- **Day 4** - God created the sun, moon, and the stars to give light to the earth and to govern and separate the day and the night. These would also serve as signs to mark seasons, days, and years.
- **Day 5** - God created every living creature of the seas and every winged bird, blessing them to multiply and fill the waters and the sky with life.
- **Day 6** - God created the animals to fill the earth. On day six, God also created man and woman (Adam and Eve) in his own image to commune with him. He

blessed them and gave them every creature and the whole earth to rule over, care for, and cultivate.

- **Day 7** - God had finished his work of creation and so he rested on the seventh day, blessing it and making it holy

LIFE OF JESUS

Jesus Christ was born circa 6 B.C. in Bethlehem. Little is known about his early life, but his life and his ministry are recorded in the New Testament, more a theological document than a biography. According to Christians, Jesus is considered the incarnation of God and his teachings are followed as an example for living a more spiritual life. Christians believe he died for the sins of all people and rose from the dead.

Background and Early Life

- Most of Jesus's life is told through the four Gospels of the New Testament Bible, known as the Canonical gospels, written by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. These are not biographies in the modern sense but accounts with allegorical intent. They are written to engender faith in Jesus as the Messiah and the incarnation of God, who came to teach, suffer and die for people's sins.
- Jesus was born circa 6 B.C. in Bethlehem. His mother, Mary, was a virgin who was betrothed to Joseph, a carpenter. Christians believe Jesus was born through Immaculate Conception.

His lineage can be traced back to the house of David. According to the Gospel of Matthew (2:1), Jesus was born during the reign of Herod the Great, who upon hearing of his birth felt threatened and tried to kill Jesus by ordering all of Bethlehem's male children under age two to be killed.

But Joseph was warned by an angel and took Mary and the child to Egypt until Herod's death, where upon he brought the family back and settled in the town of Nazareth, in Galilee.

- There is very little written about Jesus's early life. The Gospel of Luke (2:41-52) recounts that a 12-year-old Jesus had accompanied his parents on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem and became separated. He was found several days later in a temple, discussing affairs with some of Jerusalem's elders.

Throughout the New Testament, there are trace references of Jesus working as a carpenter while a young adult. It is believed that he began his ministry at age 30 when he was baptized by John the Baptist, who upon seeing Jesus, declared him the Son of God.

- After baptism, Jesus went into the Judean desert to fast and meditate for 40 days and nights. The Temptation of Christ is chronicled in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke (known as the Synoptic Gospels).

The Devil appeared and tempted Jesus three times, once to turn stone to bread, once to cast himself off a mountain where angels would save him, and once to offer him all the kingdoms of the world. All three times, Jesus rejected the Devil's temptation and sent him off.

Jesus's Ministry

- Jesus returned to Galilee and made trips to neighboring villages. During this time, several people became his disciples. One of these was Mary Magdalene, who is first mentioned in the Gospel of Luke (16:9) and later in all four gospels at the crucifixion.

Though not mentioned in the context of the "12 disciples," she is considered to have been involved in Jesus's ministry from the beginning to his death and after. According to the gospels of Mark and John, Jesus appeared to Magdalene first after his resurrection.

- According to the Gospel of John (2:1-11), as Jesus was beginning his ministry, he and his disciples traveled with his mother, Mary, to a wedding at Cana in Galilee. The wedding host had run out of wine and Jesus's mother came to him for help.

TUTOR- KIMATU RICHARD

At first, Jesus refused to intervene, but then he relented and asked a servant to bring him large jars filled with water. He turned the water into a wine of higher quality than any served during the wedding. John's gospel depicts the event as the first sign of Jesus's glory and his disciples' belief in him.

- After the wedding, Jesus, his mother Mary and his disciples traveled to Jerusalem for Passover. At the temple, they saw moneychangers and merchants selling wares. In a rare display of anger, Jesus overturned the tables and, with a whip made of cords, drove them out, declaring that his Father's house is not a house for merchants.
- The Synoptic Gospels chronicle Jesus as he traveled through Judea and Galilee, using parables and miracles to explain how the prophecies were being fulfilled and that the kingdom of God was near. As word spread of Jesus's teaching and healing the sick and diseased, more people began to follow him.

At one point, Jesus came to a level area and was joined by a great number of people. There, at the Sermon on the Mount, he presented several discourses, known as the Beatitudes, which encapsulate many of the spiritual teachings of love, humility and compassion.

- As Jesus continued preaching about the kingdom of God, the crowds grew larger and began to proclaim him as the son of David and as the Messiah. The Pharisees heard of this and publicly challenged Jesus, accusing him of having the power of Satan. He defended his actions with a parable, then questioned their logic and told them such thinking denied the power of God, which only further hardened their resolve to work against him.
- Near the city of Caesarea Philippi, Jesus talked with his disciples. According to the gospels of Matthew (16:13), Mark (8:27) and Luke (9:18), he asked, "Who do you say that I am?" The question confused them, and only Peter responded, saying, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus blessed Peter,

accepting the titles of "Christ" and the "Son of God," and declared the proclamation was a divine revelation from God.

Jesus then proclaimed Peter to be the leader of the church. Jesus then warned his disciples of the Pharisees' conspiracy against him and of his fate to suffer and be killed, only to rise from the dead on the third day.

- Less than a week later, Jesus took three of his disciples to a high mountain where they could pray alone. According to the Synoptic Gospels, Jesus's face began shining like the sun and his entire body glowed with a white light. Then, the prophets Elijah and Moses appeared, and Jesus talked to them. A bright cloud emerged around them, and a voice said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him." This event, known as the Transfiguration, is a pivotal moment in Christian theology. It supports the identity of Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God.
- Jesus arrived in Jerusalem, the week before the holiday of Passover, riding on a donkey. Great numbers of people took palm branches and greeted him at the city's entry. They praised him as the Son of David and as the Son of God. The priests and Pharisees, fearful of the growing public adulation, felt he must be stopped.
- All four Gospels describe Jesus's final week in Jerusalem. During this time, Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, confronted moneychangers and merchants in the temple, and debated with the high priests who questioned Jesus's authority. He told his disciples about the coming days and that Jerusalem's temple would be destroyed. Meanwhile, the chief priests and elders met with high priest Caiaphas, and set plans in motion to arrest Jesus. One of the disciples, Judas, met with the chief priests and told them how he would deliver Jesus to them. They agreed to pay him 30 pieces of silver.

The Last Supper

- Jesus and his 12 disciples met for the Passover meal, and he gave them his final words of faith. He also foretold of his betrayal by one of the disciples and privately let Judas know it was he. Jesus told Peter that before a rooster crowed the next morning, he would have denied knowing Jesus three times. At the end of the meal, Jesus instituted the Eucharist, which in the Christian religion, signifies the covenant between God and humans.
- After the Last Supper, Jesus and his disciples went to the Garden of Gethsemane to pray. Jesus asked God if this cup (his suffering and death) might pass by him. He implored a group of his disciples to pray with him, but they kept falling asleep. Then the time had come. Soldiers and officials appeared, and Judas was with them. He gave Jesus a kiss on the cheek to identify him and the soldiers arrested Jesus. One disciple tried to resist the arrest, brandished his sword and cut the ear off one of the soldiers. But Jesus admonished him and healed the soldier's wound.
- After his arrest, many of the disciples went into hiding. Jesus was taken to the high priest and interrogated. He was hit and spat upon for not responding. Meanwhile, Peter had followed Jesus to the high priests' court. As he hid in the shadows, three house servants asked if he was one of Jesus' disciples and each time he denied it.
After each denial, a rooster crowed. Then Jesus was led out of the house and looked directly at Peter. Peter remembered how Jesus had told him he would deny him and he wept bitterly. Judas, who was watching from a distance, became distraught by his betrayal of Jesus and attempted to return the 30 pieces of silver. The priests told him his guilt was his own. He threw the coins into the temple and later hanged himself.

The Crucifixion

TUTOR- KIMATU RICHARD

- The next day, Jesus was taken to the high court where he was mocked, beaten and condemned for claiming to be the Son of God. He was brought before Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor of Judea. The priests accused Jesus of claiming to be the king of the Jews and asked that he be condemned to death.

At first Pilate tried to pass Jesus off to King Herod, but he was brought back, and Pilate told the Jewish priests he could find no fault with Jesus. The priests reminded him that anyone who claimed to be a king speaks against Caesar. Pilate publicly washed his hands of responsibility, yet ordered the crucifixion in response to the demands of the crowd. The Roman soldiers whipped and beat Jesus, placed a crown of thorns on his head and then led him off to Mount Calvary.

- Jesus was crucified with two thieves, one at his left and the other at his right. Above his head was the charge against him, "King of the Jews." At his feet were his mother, Mary, and Mary Magdalene. The Gospels describe various events that occurred during the last three hours of his life, including the taunting by the soldiers and the crowd, Jesus's agony and outbursts, and his final words. While Jesus was on the cross, the sky darkened, and immediately upon his death, an earthquake erupted, tearing the temple's curtain from top to bottom. A soldier confirmed his death by sticking a spear into his side, which produced only water. He was taken down from the cross and buried in a nearby tomb.

Risen from the Dead

- Three days after his death, Jesus's tomb was found empty. He had risen from the dead and appeared first to Mary Magdalene and then to his mother Mary. They both informed the disciples, who were in hiding, and later, Jesus appeared to them and told them not to be afraid.

During this brief time, he beseeched his disciples to go into the world and preach the gospel to all humanity. After 40 days, Jesus led his disciples to Mount Olivet,

east of Jerusalem. Jesus spoke his final words to them, saying that they would receive the power of the Holy Spirit, before he was taken upward on a cloud and ascended into heaven.

PURPOSE OF BIBLE STORIES

The Bible is full of stories, from Genesis clear to Revelation. Entire books of the Bible are dedicated to telling a specific story. Some of these are stories of good triumphing over evil, while others are heartrending stories that tell of death and destruction. Some stories are funny; some are poignant; and some just make you shake your head.

What is the purpose behind all of these stories? Are they simply fairy tales? Did God supply the stories to break the monotony between genealogies and laws?

There is a purpose for the wide variety of stories. Every Bible story has a purpose—as would be expected of a book inspired by the great and purposeful Almighty God. The apostle Paul listed some of the purposes for the Bible in 2 Timothy 3:16: “for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.” Bible stories can make these purposes and lessons come to life for all of us.

God also recorded these stories to help parents in the vital job of teaching their children. God wants us to “remember His marvelous works which He has done” and to diligently teach our children His good ways (1 Chronicles 16:12; Deuteronomy 6:7).

We hope the Bible stories in this section (see the links below this article) will help people of all ages, and especially parents reading them to their children.

Whether for our education or to encourage us, there is always a reason God placed each story in the Bible. Though some of the stories of the Bible, such as the parables, are illustrations used to teach a lesson, all the examples in this article refer to real-life, historically accurate accounts that God also recorded for our learning.

Learning from the bad examples

One purpose of Bible stories is so we can learn from the bad examples (1 Corinthians 10:6, 11). The Bible has many stories that reveal to us examples of humans trying to live life without God or succumbing to one of many human weaknesses.

For example, in 2 Chronicles 26 we read the story of Uzziah, who was actually one of Judah's better kings. Uzziah became king when he was only 16 years old, and he had a long reign that was full of military victories. He was one of the few kings who had a personal relationship with God and was successful.

Yet he started to grow proud and went against God's law. Proud because of his power and the strength that God had given him, he decided that he would offer incense up to God, something God had commanded that only the priests should do. When the priests resisted Uzziah and tried to tell him that it was not his place, he grew angry with them. While he was arguing with the priests who had dared to go against him, God cursed him with leprosy. He was forced to live by himself for the rest of his life.

What's the purpose behind this story, set long ago in ancient Judah?

Its purpose is so we can learn from King Uzziah's example. His success caused him to grow prideful, and he came to disregard God's law. We have to be on guard so that pride doesn't strike us when God blesses us with success.

We have to learn from the bad examples if we don't want to follow in their footsteps.

Learning from the good examples

Of course, the Bible doesn't just record the bad examples that people have left behind. There are many good examples in the Bible as well.

TUTOR- KIMATU RICHARD

One of these is the example of Hezekiah, another king of Judah. When threatened with imminent destruction at the hands of the mighty Assyrians, Hezekiah asked God for assistance. Instead of being arrogant like Uzziah had been, Hezekiah tore his clothes and knelt before God. When he received a letter from the enemy, he laid it before God and humbly asked God for His help (2 Kings 19).

If Hezekiah had relied on his own feeble strength to pull him through, he would have almost certainly been annihilated. However, since he relied on God, his enemy was destroyed and his kingdom was safe for many more years.

Another excellent example in the Bible is that of the heroine of the book of Ruth. After losing her husband and father-in-law, Ruth stayed loyal to Naomi, her grieving mother-in-law, and went with her to the land of Israel.

After arriving in Israel, she worked diligently to provide for both herself and Naomi. Her loyalty and hard work were noticed by several, including a wealthy farmer named Boaz. He made sure that Ruth and Naomi were taken care of, and he eventually married Ruth.

Ruth's decision to worship the God of Israel and loyally serve her mother-in-law provides us an excellent example. She was rewarded, and God greatly blessed her and the woman to whom she was so loyal. (Read the article about [Ruth](#) in the "Women of Faith" section of this website.)

Learning about God

Because God is a great, infinite and invisible Being, how do we come to comprehend who He really is? How can we learn about God? How do we know who God is and what He is like?

TUTOR- KIMATU RICHARD

We can learn about Him through what others say in the Bible. For example, Paul tells us that God “cannot lie” (Titus 1:2), but that simple statement generally doesn’t fully sink in until we read through an account like the story of the Exodus.

There we see the extreme measures to which God will go in order to keep His word. He even took on Egypt, the world’s mightiest empire, by sending 10 devastating plagues. He did this in order to free the enslaved Israelites due to a promise He had made to Abraham hundreds of years before. God demonstrated clearly to the descendants of Abraham—and to us—that He is completely truthful and fulfills all His promises.

The Gospels also help us learn more about God. In the Gospels we see the Son of God—[Jesus Christ](#)—as a very personable Being who ached, hurt and felt like we do. More than that, these four books record His story for us to read. If you want to know what God is like, read the accounts of Jesus’ life as a human in [Matthew, Mark, Luke and John](#).

For example, most people know that Jesus Christ was a man of peace, but did that mean He would just always let people disrespect God and His temple? We can find the answer in Mark 11:15-17.

It’s encouraging to know that God takes notice of not only the great, but also the small who serve Him. During a visit to the temple in Jerusalem, Christ saw that there were profiteers who were making money off of the poor, God-fearing people who came to worship their Creator in the temple. Angry over the situation and the mockery of God’s holy temple that was making it like “a den of thieves,” Christ made a whip and herded the livestock out, as well as overturning the tables full of money taken from the poor.

We know God better and more clearly through the real-life stories documented in the Bible.

Giving encouragement

Some Bible stories are also very encouraging on a personal level.

An example of this is the story of the widow's mites (small copper coins; Mark 12:41-44). In the midst of all of the rich men giving large offerings to God in the temple, Jesus Christ took the time to notice a poor widow who gave two little coins. He realized that it was everything she had, and He pointed this out to His disciples.

It's encouraging to know that God takes notice of not only the great, but also the small who serve Him.

There are many encouraging stories of God miraculously delivering His people as well—from Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego, whom God saved from death in an incredibly hot furnace (Daniel 3), to the apostle Paul, who was stoned to the point that his enemies thought he was dead (Acts 14). “However, when the disciples gathered around him, he rose up and went into the city”! (verse 20). The great Creator God healed or perhaps even resurrected Paul!

These Bible stories are very encouraging, reminding us of God's awesome power and His love. They can lift up our spirits when times are tough.

Answering life's questions

There is another reason stories are in the Bible—to answer the questions of life. [Why is there evil](#) in the world? [Why do the good suffer](#)? There are Bible stories that help us more deeply understand the answers to many questions like these.

The Bible tells us that there is evil in the world because of the rebellion and deceitfulness of a demonic being called Lucifer and Satan (Isaiah 14). Once one of God's greatest angels, Lucifer became proud and turned into God's greatest adversary.

After swaying a third of the angels to his evil way of thinking, he started a rebellion against the Almighty and was cast to the earth.

After his original rebellion failed, Satan later tried to destroy humankind and ruin God's plan of salvation. Satan tempted the first two people to eat of the forbidden fruit (Genesis 3), which set the pattern for humanity's awful decisions and horrible sins since then. He even tried to tempt Christ to disobey God (Matthew 4:1-10).

Without the Bible, the answers to these key questions of life would remain hidden or only academic. The biblical stories bring the answers to life and give us hope.

There is a purpose for Bible stories

The many stories in the Bible are given for a reason and a purpose. Whether it's to encourage us in the hard times or to help us learn a lesson the easy way, God has told us these stories for our eternal benefit.

For more about gaining the most from God's messages in the Bible, see the other articles in the "[Bible Study](#)" section. And for specific stories to read and share with your family, see the articles in this "Bible Stories" section. New articles are being added frequently, so check back often.

WORSHIP AND FESTIVALS

There are many different ways in which Christians worship God. Worship is any act that shows devotion or love for God, ranging from praying at home to attending a church service.

Forms of worship

There are four main types of worship that Christians can engage in:

- Liturgical worship
- Non-liturgical worship
- Informal worship
- Private worship

Christians can be involved in all four of these forms of worship. Examples of activities that may take place at some or all of these forms of worship are readings from the Holy Bible, prayers and the Eucharist.

Sunday is regarded by Christians as the Sabbath because Jesus' resurrection happened on a Sunday. It is also a reminder to Christians that God rested on the seventh day of creation. Most churches have their main service on a Sunday morning.

Liturgical worship

Liturgical worship is a church service that follows a set pattern of prayers and readings, usually found in a printed book.

Christians who participate in liturgical services may feel connected to other worshippers as they are following the same traditions.

As a congregation, Christians often participate together, repeating key information and singing hymns.

Non-liturgical worship

Non-liturgical worship is more informal and has less structure, and the elements can be tailored to different types of services. For example, the sermon could be on a topical theme, and prayers could be in the service leader's own words rather than those written in a book.

Informal worship

Informal worship focuses on the adoration of God and is not always carried out in a church. Often, large auditoriums are used. Frequently the music used during informal worship is popular and modern in style, and instruments are commonly used.

Charismatic worship is a kind of informal worship. Although Charismatic services have recognisable Christian features, such as prayers and readings, they are very free-flowing services.

During informal worship, people often believe that the Holy Spirit is present and allowing them to carry out God's wishes, so the services can be quite spontaneous. Evangelical Christians usually worship in this style and may clap or shout during a service at any point, as they worship God with their whole body, not just their minds.

Quakers' worship is different as they hold meetings, rather than services, in meeting houses. These meetings last about an hour and have no set hymns, prayers or sermons. There is no leader in the meeting house and the chairs are usually arranged in a circle. Everyone worships as an equal.

Quakers spend most of the meeting in silence as this kind of worship is seen as a time for connection with God and with others, but if someone wishes to stand up and speak, they are free to do so as part of this informal worship.

Private worship

Private worship is informal and often takes place at home, but it can be liturgical or non-liturgical.

Some examples of private worship are saying grace before a meal or reading a passage from the Bible each day.

Worshipping alone can allow a person to feel close to God. Private worship can be an opportunity for Christians to explore a personal, individual connection with God.

CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS HERITAGE

Christianity, major [religion](#) stemming from the life, teachings, and death of [Jesus of Nazareth](#) (the Christ, or the Anointed One of God) in the 1st century CE. It has become the largest of the world's religions and, geographically, the most widely diffused of all faiths.

The [Apostles' Creed](#) is the most widely accepted statement of the articles of Christian faith. It is used by a number of [Christian denominations](#) for both [liturgical](#) and [catechetical](#) purposes, most visibly by liturgical churches of [Western Christian](#) tradition, including the [Latin Church](#) of the [Catholic Church](#), [Lutheranism](#), [Anglicanism](#), and [Western Rite Orthodoxy](#). It is also used by [Presbyterians](#), [Methodists](#), and [Congregationalists](#). This particular creed was developed between the 2nd and 9th centuries. Its central doctrines are those of the Trinity and God the Creator. Each of the doctrines found in this creed can be traced to statements current in the [apostolic period](#). The creed was apparently used as a summary of Christian doctrine for baptismal candidates in the churches of Rome.^[27] Its points include:

- Belief in [God the Father](#), [Jesus Christ](#) as the [Son of God](#), and the [Holy Spirit](#)
- The [death](#), [descent into hell](#), [resurrection](#) and [ascension](#) of Christ
- The holiness of the [Church](#) and the [communion of saints](#)
- Christ's [second coming](#), the [Day of Judgement](#) and [salvation](#) of the faithful

TUTOR- KIMATU RICHARD

The central tenet of Christianity is the belief in [Jesus](#) as the [Son of God](#) and the [Messiah \(Christ\)](#). Christians believe that Jesus, as the Messiah, was [anointed](#) by God as savior of humanity and hold that Jesus' coming was the fulfillment of [messianic prophecies](#) of the [Old Testament](#). The Christian concept of messiah differs significantly from [the contemporary Jewish concept](#). The core Christian belief is that through belief in and acceptance of [the death and resurrection of Jesus](#), [sinful](#) humans can be reconciled to God, and thereby are offered salvation and the promise of [eternal life](#).

Christians consider the resurrection of Jesus to be the cornerstone of their faith (see [1 Corinthians 15](#)) and the most important event in history.^[43] Among Christian beliefs, the death and resurrection of Jesus are two core events on which much of Christian doctrine and theology is based.^[44] According to the New Testament, Jesus was [crucified](#), died a physical death, was buried within a tomb, and rose from the dead three days later.

[Paul the Apostle](#), like Jews and Roman [pagans](#) of his time, believed that sacrifice can bring about new kinship ties, purity, and eternal life.^[52] For Paul, the necessary sacrifice was the death of Jesus: Gentiles who are "Christ's" are, like Israel, descendants of Abraham and "heirs according to the promise".^{[Gal. 3:29][53]} The God who raised Jesus from the dead would also give new life to the "mortal bodies" of Gentile Christians, who had become with Israel, the "children of God", and were therefore no longer "in the flesh".

Most Christians believe that human beings experience divine judgment and are rewarded either with eternal life or [eternal damnation](#). This includes the [general judgement](#) at the [resurrection of the dead](#) as well as the belief (held by Catholics,^{[84][85]} Orthodox^{[86][87]} and most Protestants) in a [judgment particular to the individual soul](#) upon physical death.

In Christian belief and practice, a *sacrament* is a [rite](#), instituted by Christ, that confers [grace](#), constituting a [sacred mystery](#). The term is derived from the [Latin](#) word *sacramentum*, which was used to translate the Greek word for *mystery*.

Views concerning both which rites are sacramental, and what it means for an act to be a sacrament, vary among Christian denominations and traditions.

Baptism is the ritual act, with the use of water, by which a person is admitted to membership of the [Church](#). Beliefs on baptism vary among denominations. Differences occur firstly on whether the act has any spiritual significance. Some, such as the Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches, as well as Lutherans and Anglicans, hold to the doctrine of [baptismal regeneration](#), which affirms that baptism creates or strengthens a person's faith, and is intimately linked to salvation

Jesus' teaching on prayer in the [Sermon on the Mount](#) displays a distinct lack of interest in the external aspects of prayer. A concern with the techniques of prayer is condemned as "pagan", and instead a simple trust in God's fatherly goodness is encouraged. Elsewhere in the New Testament, this same freedom of access to God is also emphasized. This confident position should be understood in light of Christian belief in the unique relationship between the believer and Christ through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

AFRICAN TRADITIONAL RELIGIONS

Africa, the place of origin of all humankind, is divided into numerous political and cultural regions, reflecting its diverse range of histories, ethnicities, languages, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors. Its various indigenous spiritual systems, usually called African traditional religions, are many.

Africans are a deeply spiritual people. Their traditional religions, however, are perhaps the least understood facet of African life.

Unlike other world faiths, African traditional religions have no predominant doctrinal teachings. Rather, they have certain vital elements that function as core beliefs. Among these beliefs are origin myths, the presence of deities, ancestor veneration, and divination. African cosmology (explanation of the nature of the universe) tends to assert that there is a Supreme God who is helped by a number of lesser deities. Spirits are the

TUTOR- KIMATU RICHARD

connection between the living and the invisible worlds. Anyone can communicate with the spirits, but priests, priestesses, prophets, and diviners have more direct access to invisible arenas of the world.

African religions rely on the memory of oral stories. Thus, doctrine tends to be more flexible than it is in text-based religions, and it changes according to the immediate needs of religious followers. African traditional religions are a communal endeavor, and it is not required that an individual believe in every element.

Many Africans practice ancestor veneration. Ancestors are generally the deceased elders (of either gender) who have passed from the realm of the living to that of the superhuman. They retain membership in their family, community, clan, and kin groups. Beliefs and practices of [ancestor worship](#) vary according to the local culture and religious traditions.

In most African communities a deceased person must be properly buried to become an ancestor. Proper burial entails a performance of elaborate funeral ceremonies by all members of the deceased's descendants. In addition, the deceased must have died a good death; Africans regard premature death that results from an accident or a "shameful disease" (such as smallpox, leprosy, and AIDS) to be a dreadful death.

Various African cultures have developed intricate sets of ethical customs, rules, and taboos. Many societies believe that their morals originated with God and the ancestors and were imparted to humans as elements of God's creation of the world.

In most traditional African cultures morals are of two classes—those that govern individual conduct and those that govern social and community relations. African religious leaders include the sacred kings and chiefs who often serve as both spiritual and community leaders.

Africans who follow a traditional religion rely on no scriptures, canonical texts, or holy books to guide them. In African traditional religions guidance is provided through

TUTOR- KIMATU RICHARD

myths, which are handed down orally. Elders, priests, and priestesses have served as guardians of the sacred traditions. Throughout Africa innumerable myths explain the creation of the universe, how man and woman appeared, the origin of the culture, and how people arrived in their current location.

[African art](#) is a central part of traditional religious expression. It is known worldwide for its powerful ability to represent abstract ideas and spiritual forces. African artists produce sacred icons and symbols of traditional religions in an enormous array of forms, both abstract and representational. Traditional artists typically carve images that express the powers of God, demigods, ancestors, and spirits as intermediaries between deities and humans.