What Does the Bible Say?

Teachings of the Bible
In Mennonite Perspective

Diocese-Based Leadership Training Program
Mennonite Churches of East Africa (KMC/KMT)

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Theological Education Coordinators, 2015
For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. 1 Corinthians 3:11

Introduction

The purpose of these lessons is to look at what the Bible says about some fundamental areas of faith and practice. Since the beginning of the Mennonite denomination in 1525, Mennonites are people of the Bible. In the written word we meet Jesus, the Living Word.

Mennonites are a branch of the sixteenth century Reformation called Anabaptists. Their efforts were to return the church to its biblical foundation, but they were opposed by the church and the state, they were imprisoned, exiled, even martyred. But they stood firm because they put their faith Jesus, of whom the Bible testifies. They read the Bible for guidance in faith and life.

May God help us to hold to this faith as we face the challenges in our lives.

Joseph Bontrager, Writer
April 2016, Morogoro Tanzania
1. About salvation

It is important that we understand the source of salvation, its foundation, its nature and its results.

We will compare two kinds of churches. The church of tradition emphasizes the Bible along with its traditions. In this perspective, the Bible is important, but it is not final authority, because the church interprets the Bible according to its traditions, which are human customs. For example, they may teach infant baptism and worship of saints, which are not taught in the Bible, but are part of their history.

The second kind of church is the believers’ church. The foundation of faith is only the Bible. The Mennonite church is a believers’ church.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Church of tradition teaches:</th>
<th>Believers’ church teaches:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Salvation through the sacraments</td>
<td>Salvation is by faith (Ephesians 2:8-9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salvation affects the soul, not behavior</td>
<td>Salvation is a change of life (Romans 12:2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Salvation is only forgiveness of sin</td>
<td>Salvation is redemption (Colossians 1:13-14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authority for believers is church tradition</td>
<td>Authority for believers is Jesus (Hebrews 12:2)</td>
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Sacraments are worship rituals that are believed to minister God’s grace, such as baptism, Lord’s Supper, and others. In this view, salvation is through practicing the rituals of the church, and these actions bring God’s grace, not by faith and spiritual renewal.

The Bible teaches regarding salvation that:

- For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith, ... not by works (Ephesians 2:8-9).
- For we are ...created in Christ Jesus to do good works (Ephesians 2:10). Good works do not produce salvation; salvation produces good works.
- True salvation is forgiveness of sins and to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). It is to walk in newness of life (Romans 6:4), because we have been transformed by the renewing of our mind (Romans 12:2).
- Worship rituals have no power, except to bring us to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith (Hebrews 12:2). Our faith is in Jesus, not in our actions. Acts of worship are remembrances and reminders of Jesus’ work of redemption (Luke 22:19).

Questions for discussion:

1. Why do we say the Mennonite church is a believers’ church?
2. What acts of worship do we have in our church? Explain the meaning of these actions.
3. If someone tells you he is saved because he was baptized, what will you tell them?
4. Read Hebrews 11:1,6. What is faith? List the names of people mentioned in Hebrews 11 and honored as heroes of faith. What did each of them do because of their faith?
5. Which of the following sayings is true? 1) Holy living produces salvation; or b) Salvation produces holy living. Explain your answer.
6. How can you use this teaching in your ministry or leadership?
2. About the church

One of the important issues for the sixteenth century Reformers was the nature of the church, the purpose and work of the church, and how Jesus is present in the church. The reformers wanted to return the church to its foundation, as taught in the Bible.

The church of tradition taught that the church is the presence of leaders who were ordained in the succession of Apostle Peter, and the performance of sacraments. They believed that Jesus is present in its leaders and its sacraments. In this view, the work of the church is to perform the sacraments.

The Reformers did not agree with this teaching. The believers’ church taught that the church is the fellowship of believers who are gathered together in the name of Jesus and in remembrance of Jesus. Jesus is present when believers gather in his name. The work of the church is to be salt and light of the world (Matthew 5:13-16), to announce the mighty works of God and to bring life, and to reconcile them to God.

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<tr>
<th>Church of tradition teaches:</th>
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<tr>
<td>The nature of the church is properly ordained leaders</td>
<td>The nature of the church is fellowship of believers (Matthew 18:20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The purpose of the church is to perform sacraments</td>
<td>The purpose of the church is to bring life (Matthew 13-16) and to reconcile people to God (2 Corinthians 5:20)</td>
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The Bible teaches that:

- Jesus is the foundation of the church. Matthew 16:18; 1 Corinthians 3:11; Acts 2:22-24; Acts 4:8-12; 1 Corinthians 1:23; 1 Peter 2:9
- The church is the body of Jesus Christ in the world
  - We are members of the body. 1 Corinthians 12:27
  - We are given different gifts. Romans 12:4-8
  - The purpose of the gifts is to serve each other. 1 Peter 4:10
- The church brings life to the world. Matthew 5:13-16
- The church is the temple of the Holy Spirit. 1 Corinthians 6:19
  - The Holy Spirit gives boldness in witness. Acts 4:8, 31, 33
  - The Holy Spirit gives gifts for ministry. 1 Corinthians 12:7
  - The fruit of the Holy Spirit is spiritual character. Galatians 5:22-23
  - The Holy Spirit gives patience in suffering. 2 Corinthians 1:5; 8-10
- The greatest commandment of the church is love.
  - To love God. Matthew 22:37
  - To love each other. John 13:34-35
  - To love the enemy. Matthew 5:44

Questions for discussion:
1. Read John 13:35. How will people know that we are true disciples of Jesus? How do we know that the Holy Spirit is present in the church?
2. Read Romans 12:4-8. What gifts have you seen in your church? Which gifts are missing?
3. The church is salt and light in the world. Explain how we can be salt and light.
4. Explain the meaning of ordination. Is it necessary for church leaders to be ordained?
3. About the Christian life

The Christian life is about our actions and everyday living, how the believer should live. There is a difference between the teachings of the Church of Tradition and the Believers’ Church. The Church of Tradition emphasizes the participation of the believer in church activities, such as worship and sacraments. In this view, the Christian life is to share in church life without requiring spiritual change.

The Believers’ Church teaches that the Christian life is the way believers live and act in daily life. The worship rituals are remembrances of the work of Jesus and signs of the work of the Holy Spirit in the spirit of the believer. The life of the believer is changed because the heart is changed. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind (Romans 12:2).

The Christian life is to follow Jesus, to deny himself and take up his cross and follow me (Mark 8:34). Jesus began his ministry by calling disciples (Matthew 4:18-22), and his last word to his disciples was to go and make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19). The Christian life is to be a disciple of Jesus.

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<tr>
<td>The Christian life is to do the sacraments</td>
<td>The Christian life is to follow the teachings and example of Jesus (1 John 2:6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We must obey earthly authority</td>
<td>We must obey God rather than human authority (Acts 5:29)</td>
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</table>

The Bible teaches about the life of the believer that:

- Ephesians 2:8-10. Good works do not bring salvation, but salvation brings good works.
  - For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith, ...not by works (8-9)
  - For we are ...created in Christ Jesus to do good works (10)
- Romans 6:4. Jesus’ resurrection from the dead is an example of our new life.
  - Just as Christ was raised from the dead..., we too may live a new life.
- Romans 8:5-14. To have the sinful mind or the spiritual mind
  - The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace (6)
  - The Holy Spirit builds up the person’s spirit, so that he can do the will of God (11)
  - The life that pleases God is purity and love (1 Thessalonians 4:1-7)
- Galatians 5:16-26. The sinful nature and the fruit of the Spirit
  - Acts of the sinful nature sexual immorality, impurity, lustful pleasures, idolatry, sorcery, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissension, division, envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other sins like these (19-21, New Living Translation)
  - Fruit of the Spirit love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (22-23)
  - The sinful nature and the Spirit are in conflict with each other (17)

Questions for Discussion:
1. Explain how good works are produced by salvation.
2. Read Galatians 5:19-21. What is the root of the acts of the sinful nature?
3. How can we strengthen the fruit of the Spirit in our character and actions?
4. How can you use this teaching in your leadership and ministry?
4. About the work of the church

Jesus introduced his work and purpose by reading the words of the prophet Isaiah 61:1-2,

_The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor._ (Luke 4:18-19)

- First, Jesus called disciples to make them _fishers of men._ (Mark 1:17)
- Second, after his resurrection, Jesus sent his disciples, _As the Father has sent me, I am sending you._ (John 20:21)
- Finally, before he ascended to heaven, Jesus said to his disciples, _Therefore go and make disciples of all nations._ (Matthew 28:19)

The work of the church in the world is to continue the work that Jesus did on earth. Jesus preached, taught, healed the sick, delivered those who were bound by unclean spirits, and he showed clearly the nature of life in the Kingdom of God, that it is servanthood, forgiveness, and love.

The Believers’ Church teaches that all believers are called to do the work of the gospel. It is not only the ordained persons and leaders who are called. The Holy Spirit has given gifts of service to all believers (1 Corinthians 12:11) so the work of Jesus is done.

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<tr>
<td>Ordained and appointed leaders do the work of the church</td>
<td>All believers have been called and given gifts to do the work of Jesus in the world</td>
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The Bible teaches about the work of the church that:

- Matthew 5:13-16. Disciples of Jesus are _salt of the earth_ and _light of the world._
- Mark 3:14-15. Jesus called and sent his disciples to preach and drive out demons.
- Philippians 2:12-17. Our ministry:
  - Our ministry _works out our salvation_; it completes and confirms it (12)
  - Our ministry is _God working in us to will and to act according to his purpose_ (13)
  - Our ministry brings light into a dark world (15)
  - Our ministry is an offering of ourselves to God (17)
- Ephesians 4:11-12. The work of church leaders is to build up and to strengthen the body of Christ, which is the church, _for works of service_ (12)

Questions for discussion:

1. Who is responsible to do the work of the church? The leaders or all believers? Explain.
2. Are we able to do the same works today that Jesus announced in Luke 4:18-20?
3. Do you agree that the work of leaders is to do strengthen believers for the work of ministry?
4. How can we be salt and light in our world? (Matthew 5:13-16)
5. About church leadership

The church is a combination of the divine and the human. The divine establishes the foundation, character, and purpose of the church. The human is the church’s relationships, language, strategies, and leadership. In the church the kingdom of God is near (Mark 1:15).

People need leadership to provide unity and guidance. Even though believers are led by the Holy Spirit, the value of leadership is to share the wisdom and experience of ministry, and to strengthen unity and peace among believers. For this reason it is important that leaders are led by the Holy Spirit and live lives of faith and obedience to God.

In some churches leadership is seen as position, and leaders demand respect and to be served. Jesus explained the nature of leadership as humility and servanthood.

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<tr>
<td>Leadership is position and respect</td>
<td>Leadership is servanthood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaders demand respect of their office</td>
<td>Leaders earn respect by their character</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaders expect to be served by others</td>
<td>Leaders give themselves in service to others</td>
</tr>
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The Bible teaches about leadership:

- **Order.** 1 Corinthians 14:33,40
  - God is not a God of disorder, but of order (33)
  - Leaders assure that everything is done in a fitting and orderly way (40)

- **Shepherds.** 1 Peter 5:1-4
  - Leaders shepherd and oversee God’s flock (2)
  - Leaders are eager to serve believers as examples, not lording it over them (3)
  - Leaders are shepherds under the leadership of Chief Shepherd (4)

- **Ministry.** Matthew 20:25-28. Jesus’ teaching about leadership
  - The rulers of the Gentiles lord it over and exercise authority (25)
  - Among Jesus’ disciples, greatness is servanthood (26-27)
  - Jesus is an example of servanthood (28, read also Philippians 2:4-11)

- **Leadership gifts.** Ephesians 4:8-14
  - Jesus gives leadership gifts (8,11)
  - There are 5 leadership gifts: apostle (as God’s representative); prophet (one who proclaims a word from God); evangelist (announce the gospel); pastor (care for believers); teacher (teach the believers)
  - The purpose of leadership gifts is to prepare God’s people for service (12), to lead them in growth to maturity (13); so they are no longer infants (14).
  - Leadership is ministry, not position.

- **Character is the foundation for leadership.** 1 Timothy 3:2-10

Questions for discussion:
1. Describe the character of Jesus in his life and ministry.
2. Explain the difference between a leader who demands respect and one who earns respect.
3. What are some ways church leaders are able to serve the members.
4. What are some character traits that make the leader a good servant to people.
6. About worship

It is normal in all Christian churches for believers to gather each week to worship God. In the church of tradition, worship is a time and place to receive the sacraments. Because they understand that sacraments must be led and administered by leaders with proper authority, worship is led by a priest or an ordained person. Worship is receiving the sacraments.

The believers' church, such as Mennonites, understands that the purpose of worship is to strengthen the worshiper’s relationship with God. Believers remember God’s acts, and praise and thank God for his faithfulness. They also receive teaching and guidance and are sent into the world. The purpose of worship is to meet God and to receive God’s word.

Worship involves a person’s spirit, but it also touches the soul and body. It involves the spirit because it is about our relationship with God. It touches the soul when we feel joy and peace. It touches the body because we respond by singing, dancing, clapping hands, etc.

The style of worship is different according to culture and customs of the people. Some prefer joyful songs with dancing, others prefer quieter worship. Worship must always be according to the foundation of the Bible, but the order and style of worship is planned in a way that brings the worshippers near to God and hear God’s word in a way they are able to understand.

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<th>Church of tradition teaches:</th>
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<tr>
<td>Worship is led by ordained leaders</td>
<td>Worship is the fellowship of all believers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worship is receiving the sacraments</td>
<td>Worship is remembrance of God’s acts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worship is a ritual and a physical act</td>
<td>Worship is praise and commitment</td>
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The Bible teaches about worship:

Worship in the Old Testament
- Psalm 100. Psalms and songs of praise and prayer to God.

Worship in the New Testament
- Hebrews 10:23-25. *Let us not give up meeting together, …encourage one another, …spur one another on toward love and good works.*

Other biblical teachings about worship
- 1 Corinthians 14:33. *God is not a God of disorder but of peace.* Worship should planned and orderly.
- 1 Corinthians 14:26-27. Worship includes all believers, so the church is strengthened.
- Matthew 6:7. *When you pray, do not keep on babbling like the pagans.*
Order of worship

Many churches follow an order of worship in four steps:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gathering</td>
<td>Preparing for worship</td>
<td>Welcome, songs of praise, prayer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearing</td>
<td>Receive the Word of God</td>
<td>Reading scripture, sermon, teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responding</td>
<td>Respond to the Word of God</td>
<td>Thanking, repenting, witness, offering, healing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sending</td>
<td>Close the worship</td>
<td>Challenge to commitment, closing, leaving</td>
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Liturgical year:

Some churches of tradition plan worship according to the liturgical year. This plan observes special days and times that remember the life of Jesus, such as:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Remembrance of:</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advent</td>
<td>Prepare for the Savior’s coming</td>
<td>4 Sundays before Christmas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christmas</td>
<td>Birth of Jesus, Immanuel</td>
<td>December 25 each year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lent</td>
<td>Fasting in preparation for Easter</td>
<td>40 days before Easter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Easter</td>
<td>Suffering, death, resurrection of Jesus</td>
<td>According to the moon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pentecost</td>
<td>Coming of the Holy Spirit</td>
<td>50 days after Easter</td>
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</table>

It is not required to plan according to the liturgical year. But special days are reminders of important events in the life of Jesus and the beginning of the church. They are reminders of the ministry of Jesus in the world and his teachings (Luke 22:19). Some Mennonites around the world plan worship according to the liturgical year, but others do not.

Mennonite World Fellowship Sunday

*Mennonite World Fellowship Sunday* remembers the birth of the Mennonite church on January 21, 1525. It is each year on the Sunday nearest to January 21. For more information, see the website [www.mwc-cmm.org/article/world-fellowship-sunday](http://www.mwc-cmm.org/article/world-fellowship-sunday).

The churches that follow the liturgical year plan worship according to the special days. The songs, readings, sermon, and all parts of worship point to the meaning of the special day.

Questions for discussion:

1. Explain in your own words why Christian believers gather for worship.
2. Discuss the four steps of worship. How can these steps be helpful in worship?
3. Explain the benefits of planning worship according to the liturgical year.
4. What can we do to strengthen and improve our worship experience?
6. About the church and the state

The relationship between church and state was a subject of discussion among the early Mennonites. In the church of tradition that they came from, the church and the state joined together and shared authority. The church and the state consulted together and cooperated in their response to Christians who believed differently than they. The Mennonites were persecuted because they did not agree to the union of church and state, and they refused to obey some laws such as infant baptism and taking up weapons of war.

The believers’ church taught that the kingdom of God is different from the kingdoms of the world, according to the words of Jesus (John 18:36). They believed the state government was given authority from God to maintain order with the use of force and weapons. But church leaders are responsible for matters of faith and spiritual leadership, and they follow the law of love using spiritual methods.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Church of tradition teaches:</th>
<th>Believers’ church teaches:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Church and state rule and maintain order</td>
<td>Church leads in spiritual matters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church is joined with the state</td>
<td>The kingdom of God is not of this world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Society is governed by force</td>
<td>Leadership is by the law of love</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use weapons of war including death</td>
<td>Use spiritual weapons in love</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Bible teaches about church and state that:

1. Government is ordained by God.
   - John 19:11; Romans 13:1. The state’s authority is given by God.
   - Romans 13:3-4; Titus 3:1. We are commanded to obey and pray for government leaders.
   - Deuteronomy 16:18-20. Government leaders must practice justice and not show partiality or take bribes.

2. The kingdom of God is a spiritual kingdom, not of this world.
   - John 18:36. Jesus refused to fight as the world fights.
   - Ephesians 6:12. Our struggle is not physical, but spiritual.

3. The church follows the nature of the kingdom of God.
   - Galatians 6:2. The law of Christ is love and mutual service.
   - Philippians 2:3-7. The attitude of Christ is humility.
   - Matthew 25:31-46. The church’s ministry is to show mercy to those in need.

4. Believers may be persecuted by leaders of government and the church
   - Acts 4:1-3. Peter and John were arrested and put in prison.
   - Acts 5:41. The disciples rejoiced that they were worthy to be persecuted.
   - 2 Timothy 3:12. Persecution is normal for believers.

Questions for discussion:

1. What did Jesus mean when he said, My kingdom is not of this world? (John 18:36)

2. The state responsibilities including administration, security, and services. Can a believer work for the state? Explain. How can we know what is appropriate?

3. What commands from the state might require the believer to not obey? Give an example and explain why a believer cannot obey.
8. About the Holy Spirit

What we believe about the Holy Spirit is important because the Holy Spirit is God present among us. We are the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19). But churches believe and teach different understandings of the Holy Spirit. Spirit churches emphasize the Holy Spirit’s gifts of power, such as speaking in tongues. Mennonite churches emphasize the work of Jesus through the Holy Spirit, such as holiness of character and life, but the emphasis is on Jesus. Jesus said the Holy Spirit will testify of him (John 15:26), so we praise Jesus for redemption. But we recognize the work of the Holy Spirit among us and in us.

**Spirit churches** teach:

- Signs of the Holy Spirit’s power, such as speaking in tongues, are evidence of salvation.
- Every believer must demonstrate the work of the Holy Spirit in miraculous ways.
- Gifts of the Holy Spirit show the power of God and are evidence of holiness.

**Mennonite church** teaches:

- The fruit of the Spirit, which is love and holiness of character, is evidence of salvation.
- Every believer has been given gifts of the Spirit for ministry and to give glory to God.
- Gifts of the Spirit are for the purpose of building up the church, the body of Christ.

The **Holy Spirit** is God within and among us. As Jesus was God among us as a human, so is the Holy Spirit God among us in spirit.

The Bible teaches about the Holy Spirit that:

1. Jesus sent the Holy Spirit after his ascension to dwell with us. John 14:25; 15:26
2. The Holy Spirit is given to those who believe in Jesus. John 7:39; Acts 5:32
3. The work of the Holy Spirit in believers:
   - Spiritual rebirth of those who believe in Jesus. John 3:5-8; Titus 3:5
   - Teaches and leads into truth. John 16:13
   - Empowers the believers for witness. Acts 1:8; 4:8
   - Gives the gifts of the Spirit as he wills. 1 Corinthians 12:4-11
   - Changes us into the image of the Lord. 2 Corinthians 3:18; Romans 12:2
   - Strengthens and comforts in persecution. Acts 9:31
4. The fruit of the Spirit in our character and life is evidence of the Holy Spirit in us. Galatians 5:16, 22-23
5. Living by the Holy Spirit gives life, living according to the flesh brings death. Romans 8:13-14

Questions for discussion:

1. According to the above comments, which believers receive the Holy Spirit?
2. Which is more important, to speak in tongues or have the fruit of the Spirit? Explain.
3. Is healing a sign of the Holy Spirit?
4. How have you seen the Holy Spirit work in your life and lives of your friends?
5. What is the greatest sign of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer?
9. **About angels, spirits, and the living dead**

The Bible speaks about angels and spirits. Angels are spirits that are sent by God to protect and guide humans in the ways of truth. There are also unclean spirits who serve evil Satan whose purpose is to deceive, destroy, and to kill.

**Angels** were created by God to be messengers and helpers of God to protect and guide humans in the ways of truth (Hebrews 1:14; Psalms 91:11).

**Satan** was a high angel, but he raised himself against God and was removed. He seeks ways to deceive people and to destroy the work of God (Isaiah 14:12-15; Ezekiel 28:12-17).

**Unclean spirits** are spirits who are loyal to Satan. They were probably angels who joined Satan’s rebellion against God. They gain entrance to humans through curses, ritual sacrifices, sexual sin, unholy thoughts (such as fear, envy, anger), or through inheritance.

The **living dead** are spirits of people who died but the spirit did not return to God. In African tradition, the living dead are able to send blessing or curse to the human community.

The Bible teaches about angels and spirits that:

1. **Satan** is a deceiver and accuser
   - The serpent deceived Adam and Eve and the doubted God’s word; he tempted them to obey their physical desires rather than God. Genesis 3:1-5
   - Satan accused Job and said that if God removes his protection, he will curse God. But Job was faithful and God blessed him. Job 1:6-22; 2:1-10; 42:12-17

2. **Angels** are protectors and messengers of God to humans
   - God sent an angel to protect Daniel. Daniel 6:21-22
   - The angel Gabriel was sent to Mary to announce the birth of Jesus. Luke 1:26-33
   - An angel warned Joseph and told him to go to Egypt. Matthew 2:13
   - Angels surround the throne of Jesus and sing his praises. Revelation 5:11-12

3. The **spirit of man** will return to God who gave it. Proverbs 12:7; John 14:1-3
   - The spirit of the dead may remain on earth because of deception by Satan or by not knowing God’s plan.
   - A spirit of the dead may be commanded by evil to control a person similar to an unclean spirit.

4. **Jesus** has power over unclean spirits and commanded them to leave. Luke 4:33-35
   - Jesus gave his disciples power and authority over unclean spirits. Luke 9:1

5. **God** forbids witchcraft, divining, casting spells, divining, and consulting the dead. Deuteronomy 18:10-11; Leviticus 19:26,31; Isaiah 47:12-14
   - Those who worship idols and practice witchcraft will not enter the new Jerusalem. Galatians 5:20-21; Revelation 22:15

6. **We have victory over evil** by being filled with the Holy Spirit, by admonishing one another with praise and thanksgiving (Ephesians 5:18-20), and by strengthening the fruit of the Spirit in our life (Galatians 5:22-26).

**Questions for discussion:**

1) Why are some believers bothered by unclean spirits or spirits of the dead?

2) How can a believer protect himself so he is not controlled by unclean spirits?
10. About peace and reconciliation

Peace was important in the life of Jesus. In the world there is war and conflict, between nations and between individuals. But Jesus taught peace in our spirit and in actions.

1. Jesus taught peace and reconciliation
   - *Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.* Matthew 5:9
   - He commanded us to love and pray for our enemies. Matthew 5:44
   - Peacemaking begins with forgiveness. Matthew 6:12; 18:21-22

2. The gospel is a word of peace
   - *Live at peace with everyone.* Romans 12:18
   - God’s purpose in Jesus is to *reconcile to himself all things ... by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.* Colossians 1:20
   - Jesus Christ *has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility,* and has reconciled those who were once enemies. Ephesians 2:13-17
   - *Do not repay evil for evil.... Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.* Romans 12:17-21
   - God established government to rule by force (Romans 13:3-4), but Christians follow the law of Christ, which is love. John 13:34
   - Our weapons are not of this world, but of the power of God. 2 Corinthians 10:4
   - Peace is a fruit of the Spirit. Galatians 5:22
   - Jesus reconciled us to God and gave us the ministry of reconciliation. 2 Corinthians 5:18-19

3. About peacemaking
   - There are small conflicts, as in *disagreements,* or large conflicts, as in *rivalry, fighting,* and *war.*
   - Our differences and disagreements can be sources of strength if we talk, listen to each other, and resolve the differences for the benefit of all. 1 Corinthians 12:4-8
   - Small conflicts that are not resolved will continue to grow. Rivalries and wars reduce our strength. James 4:1-3

4. Steps to making peace
   - Jesus taught 4 steps to reconcile with the brother. Matthew 18:15-17
     - **Step 1,** go alone to the brother who offended you. (15)
     - **Step 2,** if he does not hear you, go with another person as witness. (16)
     - **Step 3,** if he does not hear you, go to the fellowship of believers. (17)
     - **Step 4,** if he does not hear the church, remove him from membership. (17)
   - The purpose of reconciliation is to restore relationships. 2 Corinthians 2:6-8

Questions for discussion:

1) Think of a conflict you experienced. How did you work to make peace?

2) How was peacemaking and reconciliation done in traditional Africa? Can we use those methods today?

3) Do you think the steps in Matthew 18:15-17 are effective to make peace? Explain your answer.