**8. UNENDING LIFE**

* The term unending life refers to eternity which means everlasting life. Therefore, unending life means that people continue to live in another form even after their death.
* After death the body decomposes but the soul continues to live because it goes to live in another world (spiritual world)
* Death is a transition from the physical world(life) to a spiritual world. To some people death is un kind and taken to be a curse while to others death is positive and a route to eternal happiness.
* To scientists, death is the end of life while in religion it is a process to another life. People believe that the dead go to hell or heaven depending on how they have lived on earth. Young people think less about death until someone close to them dies.
* Many people question the existence of God and the life to come. This is due to scientific theories which oppose the existence of God. So, they reject issues about life after death basing on what they see, hear and what they learn.

 **REASONS FOR DOUBTING LIFE AFTER DEATH.**

* Confusing explanation given by different religions; Some people say that life after death is just a religious theory explained by different religions. Each religion has its own way of explaining this theory which brings doubt among people.
* It contradicts with science; Science proves that death is the end of everything and that is why the educated have opposed life after death. Scientific research has shown that life stops when a person dies.
* Modernity declares it ancient; Modern society looks at believing in eternal life as an outdated fact of the ancient people who lacked the scientific approach towards life.
* Threat factor; Many people look at it as a created threat by society especially in religions to draw people to the churches for personal interests of preachers.
* People lack absolute facts about this life; To many people even those who talk about this kind of life lack facts about it their information looks to be more forged than realistic. This is because they themselves have never died.
* Lack of clear evidence of the dead coming back; Though society has some information about the appearance of the dead to some people, this cannot be proved by those who claim so which makes life after death doubtable.
* Morality factor; People argue that theories about life after death were composed just to tame people’s conduct so as to keep a morally upright society. Places like heaven and hell are used to make people live with the expected moral standards.
* To some people it is a consolation factor. Those who reject issues about life after death argue that this theory is a consolation to those who have failed to achieve in this earthly life. They use it as a cover up to continue living with hope.
* The fear of death by even those who preach about this life. Many people doubt life after death due to the fact that believers express much fear for death. One wonders if death is just a passage to a perfect life why do believers fear to die?
* The fact that even the religious cry/ mourn bitterly when they lose relatives make many people doubt life after death. They wonder if it was their why people cry instead of dancing and celebrating.
* Less benefit in believing or opposing life after death. Other people say that they benefit less in either believing or opposing eternal life. In most cases they remain the way they are no punishment for those who oppose and neither benefit for supporters this make them doubt eternal life.

 **WAYS IN WHICH THE CHURCH REMEMBERS THOSE WHO DIED IN CHRISTIAN FAITH**

* The Church remembers those who died in faith by naming people after them to keep memory of them. For example, many people are named after the Uganda martyrs such as kizito omuto Charles Lwanga and Noah Mawaggali.
* The church also prays through the saints to intercede for Christians before God so as to attain eternal life.
* The church elevates the faithful dead to the level of saints and this process is referred to as beatification. For instance, Pope John Paul was declared a saint recently.
* Christian centers and church buildings are dedicated to them. For instance, Uganda martyrs Basilica Namugongo and All saints church Nakasero.
* The names of the dead are also given to places of influence. For example, St. Balikudembe market The former Owino market in Kampala was named after St. Balikudembe the martyr.
* The dead are consulted through prayer to intercede for the living. For example, Mother Mary is usually consulted by the Catholics in a rosary especially in May and October.
* The church especially the Catholic church celebrates feast days for the saints. For instance, all saints’ day on 1st November every year, Uganda martyrs’ day on 3rd June and St. Joseph’s day on 19th march.
* The Church also organizes prayers for the dead annually to remember them and pray for the redemption of their souls. For example, on every 2nd November the church prays for the souls in purgatory.
* Songs are also composed in praise of God for the life and strength He gave the dead and in recognition of their services. For example, “Twebaza Mapeera” a song recognizing Father Loudel and brother Amass’ contribution as missionaries to Africa.
* Books magazines and other Christian literature have been written about them to remember what they did for the church. E.g. “THE MEN OF FAITH” a book written on the Uganda martyrs.
* Drama and films have been acted and recorded to remember them. Padre Pio film and Noah’s ark.

 **HOW MODERN CHRISTIANS PREPARE FOR UNENDIND LIFE?**

* In the modern society due to the influence of Christianity, people make preparations for life to come or life after death in the following ways;
* Some prepare for eternal life through receiving sacraments such as Baptism, penance and holy Eucharist to prepare their souls for life after death.
* Many Christians carryout works of charity like looking after the sick, visiting those in prison and feeding orphans and widows to prepare for eternal life.
* They also prepare for this life by accepting Jesus Christ as their personal savior and presenting all their hardships to him and live according to His will.
* By naming people after saints like St Paul, St John so as to be guided and protected by such Saints for their spiritual growth.
* By involving in church activities such as taking readings in church, attending mass and prayers which keep them pure and humble.
* Through taking on religious vocations such as priesthood, deacons, sisters which help them to be more close to God and serve Him so as to strengthen their bond with God in preparation for eternal life.
* Through building churches as worshipping places where people go to praise God the creator.
* Others prepare for eternal life by paying church dues/tithes and giving offertory so as to fulfill their religious requirements.
* Through fasting during the month of lent where people are expected to carry out forgiveness and reconciliation.
* Through attending fellowships, retreats, conferences, crusades and bible study aiming at spiritual development.
* By praying in the morning, afternoon, evening and night as a community of believers and on individual basis to strengthen their bond with God.
* By making pilgrims to holy places e.g. Jerusalem, Rome, Namugongo.
* Through watching Christian films and programmes like religious moments.
* Through preaching and extending the word of God to others.
* Celebrating feast days like all Saints day, martyrs’ day and Christmas day.
* By joining religious movements e.g. YCs, xaverians and legion of Mary.
* By setting up radio and TV stations to extend the word of God to a wider community e.g. radio Maria, LTV.
* By accepting persecution for the sake of Christ as the Uganda martyrs sacrificed their lives and accepted death instead of disobeying God.
* Through reading and writing Christian literature so as to make others know more about God.
* Many Christians compose and sing religious songs to prepare for life after death and to help others prepare for life after death.

 **ATTITUDE OF A MODERN CHRISTIAN SHOULD HAVE TOWARDS DEATH**

* A modern Christian should take death as a mere change of form of life and a gate way to a better and more meaningful life.
* One should face death with courage because Jesus resurrected from the dead and broke the barriers and strong ties of death.
* One should have faith and trust in Jesus who conquered death for He says there is a better life after death.
* Christians should have hope in eternal/everlasting life which begins here and now.
* Christians should rejoice in the fact of Jesus’ resurrection, continue to announce the good news because believers will be able to resurrect like their master.
* A Christian should have courage to endure all sorts of even if it means death. One should know that eternal begins here and now and therefore should be concerned with regulating his/her life in order to maintain a good relationship with God.
* A Christian should have hope in resurrection of all people at the end of time.
* A Christian should prepare himself for a happy day by repenting and receiving other sacraments.
* One should break barriers which separate him from God by creating fellowship with God and our fellow men.
* One should keep himself pure in heart and mind and should encourage others to welcome death.
* A Christian should live in love with neighbors and should look at death as a gate way to heaven
* A Christian should rejoice and celebrate when a fellow Christian dies because such a person has gone back to his permanent home.

 **AFRICAN TRADITIONAL VIEW/ UNDERSTANDING OF LIFE AFTER DEATH**

* **Spiritual life;** In African traditional society, life after death was taken to be spiritual. To them after death one would join the world of spirits where his ancestors lived.
* **The dead remained with desires;** In the spiritual world the dead remained with physical desires such as food, property, women and authority. That is why in some cultures people were buried with their property.
* **Eternal life was taken to be superior;** To Africans life after death was superior than life lived on earth. This was because of the belief that the dead lived near gods/ ancestors and acted as mediators between the living and the gods.
* **In Africa life after death influenced one’s life on earth.** They believed that after death a person continued to live in the same way he had been living here on earth. That is leaders remained leaders, the good people would join the ancestors while the bad would join the world of violent spirits.
* **That the dead had the ability to come back;** They also believed that the dead would come back and live with them physically in form of other creatures or spiritually and that is why in some cultures like among the Baganda they built for them huts.
* **It was an extension of family life;** They also believed that life here after was an extension of family life. They believed that the dead continued to have great interest and influence in family affairs and that why they were consulted before taking important decisions in the family.
* **Freedom of movement was granted in in the spiritual world;** Africans believed that after death spirits were free to move to any place and any home less restrictions. That is why they restricted children from moving at some hours of the day, shouting so as not to disturb them.
* **Life after death had levels;** To Africans, life after death had levels and the dead needed qualifications from one level to the other. That is the recent dead had their level, then the ancestors and the gods respectively.
* **It was determined by quality of life on earth;** Africans believed that life after death was based on one’s living quality on earth. One would enjoy this kind of life if for instance he had children, wealth and had a good relationship with the ancestors.
* **That the living dead had demands they would make to the living;** The dead would make demands which were supposed to be met by the living so as to have harmony with them. The conduct of the living was based on the demands made by the living dead.
* **They understood life after death in terms of blessings and curses;** To the Africans the dead had authority to bless or curse the living depending on the relationship they kept with them. Luck and misfortunes in traditional Africa were linked to the dead.

**RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE DEAD AND THE LIVING**

**IN AFRICAN TRADITIONAL SOCIETY**

* The dead were taken as members of the family and were in most cases informed or invited on special family celebrations especially during marriage ceremonies.
* Names of the dead would be given to the young ones as a way of seeking for protection from them. The dead were the ones to protect and defend the living from aggression.
* The dead shared a close contact with the living that is why they were always remembered by the living and would share with them foods and drinks.
* They shared Father-son relationship; The living depended much on the dead for survival and that is why they were consulted in times of crises like drought, famine and during wars.
* The dead acted as mediators between the living and gods/God. They could talk to God on behalf of the living.
* The dead visited the living occasionally and during such visits they would either bless or curse the living depending of the prevailing circumstances.
* The living would sometimes get possessed by the spirits of the dead especially if there was a problem to be solved. Thus sometimes the dead acted as judges in traditional Africa.
* The people were also guided and treated by the dead in case of complicated sicknesses. The dead would help the living to find medicine of such diseases and their instructions were vital in averting plagues in traditional Africa.
* The living had a responsibility of venerating the dead through explicit acts of worship and offering them material gifts.
* There was great fear for the dead by the living and this was because the dead were taken to be more powerful than the living and were taken to be everywhere and seeing everything.
* The dead would appear to the living physically or in form of dreams from which information concerning family affairs were given.

**ACTIVITIES WHICH THE AFRICANS PERFORMED TO KEEP THEM IN TOURCH WITH THE DEAD/PRACTICES THAT SHOWED THAT THERE WAS LIFE AFTER DEATH OR THE DEAD WERE LIVING**

* The dead in traditional Africa were buried with material property because they believed that they would need them in the spiritual world. This was a common practice in west Africa, Egypt and among the Karamojong of Uganda.
* Africans respected burial sites and this was done through keeping them clean all the time, restricting children from playing near them and decorating them. This was done to make the dead happy.
* The names of the dead were given to their born children so as to entrust the children into the hands of the ancestors for protection and to make the dead resurrect through these children. For example, Luutu of Mamba clan among the Baganda of central region.
* Africans shared foods and drinks with the ancestors by either pouring some down before eating for the ancestors to eat first or in some tribes, food would be taken to the graves for the dead to eat. This was common among the Samya and Bagwere of eastern Uganda.
* Burial rites were performed before and after burial to make the dead comfortable in their new home. In some societies sacrifices were made for the dead in order to appease them.
* The living would consult the ancestors in case of calamities so as to get solutions from them. For example, in case of problems like sickness, barrenness and wars among the baganda of central Uganda, ancestors like Muwanga, Nagadya in charge of fertility and Kibuuka in charge of wars were consulted.
* The Africans also feared to keep, use or misuse the property of the dead. In some communities like the Hima of western Uganda, the property of the dead would be destroyed and relatives sometimes migrated to stop the spirit of the dead from following them.
* Africans also cleaned the dead before burial that is the bodies were bathed and the hair cut off in order to prepare them for the new life they had entered. This practice was common among the baganda of central Uganda.
* Africans also prepared the sick before death in order to make such people connected to the world of ancestors before death. For example, among the Ibo of southern Nigeria, elders would counsel the sick and perform some rituals that handed over the sick to his ancestors.
* Africans built shrines for the ancestors so as to make them rest is such huts. They believed that these shrines were places of aboard for the ancestors. This was common among the Baganda where each divinity had a specific shrine where people would go for blessings.
* In some societies the dead were buried near homes. This was done to keep in touch with them and to enable them access their homes and help their family members during crises. For example, among the Japadhola of eastern Uganda the dead were buried in the compound facing the entrance of the hut with the belief that would enter and get out at will.
* In traditional Africa people would have good conduct so as to prepare themselves for life after death.
* Great respect was given on physical features like mountains and water bodies as well as some animals because they were taken as places of aboard for the living dead.
* Children were restricted from moving at some specific time of the day, playing under shades of trees, water bodies and near grave yards especially during the afternoon hours for fear that they would disturb the dead when resting.
* Funeral rites were organized for the dead to enable them get heirs from which the dead would pass and continue living with others and participate in family affairs.
* The Africans carried out the instruction given by the departed before death to prevent the dead from disorganizing them and punish them. These instructions included where to be buried how and who to bury.
* The dead were buried at a specific time depending on the age and responsibility to enable them reach faster and be welcomed by the ancestors responsible.
* The living used the dead as messengers to the spiritual world. For example, among the Bemba of Zambia, the living whispered messages to the dead so as to carry them to the next world.

**SIMILARITIES BETWEEN TRADITIONAL AFRICA AND CHRISTIAN VIEWS ON UNENDING LIFE**

* Both believe that death is a transition of life from physical to spiritual life.
* Both believe that eternal life begins here on the earth.
* They both accept the fact that the dead are more powerful than the living.
* Both accept that there are different places where people go after death. The good go to a specific place and even the bad to a special place.
* Both believe that life after death is more superior than life on the earth.
* In both situations the dead are buried decently while accompanying them with prayers and other rituals.
* In both the dead are venerated by acts of worship and building for them places.
* Both recognize death at the point when the spirit separates from the body.
* Both believe in the existence of an invisible part of the universe where the spirits live.
* Both honour and pray mentioning the names of the ancestors to stand for them before God for assistance.
* Both offer prayers individually and collectively in preparation for life after death.
* Both identify the spirit of the dead by its personal name and character as that while on earth.
* They both believe that sometimes strange spirits of the dead attack people and possess them and make them abnormal.

**DIFFERENCES BETWEEN AFRICAN TRADIONAL AND CHRISTIAN VIEWS ON UNENDING LIFE**

* In traditional Africa judgement started here on earth and was instant while in Christianity there will be a final judgement at the end of the world.
* For the Christians, the Eucharist is the source and sign of eternal life while to the Africans sharing food with the ancestors was the source of life after death.
* To Christians, eternal life is got through having faith in Jesus Christ while to the Africans eternal life was a process from birth to death. That is one was born, grew up and died to join the ancestors.
* In traditional Africa, the dead would bless and curse the living while in Christianity it is only God to bless or curse and the dead just intercede for the living.
* In Christianity the souls of the dead go and live with God eternally while in Traditional Africa the dead continued to live among their relatives in a spiritual form.
* In traditional Africa the dead were buried with material items while among Christians the dead go the way they came. They are buried less material property.
* In traditional Africa, the dead had desires like food and women while in Christianity, the dead live like angels less such desires.
* Traditionalists believed that when one died his spirit lingered around his home while Christians believe that after death the spirits go straight for judgement.
* In traditional Africa the dead made certain demands which would be fulfilled by the living while in Christianity demands end with physical life after death one has less influence on the living and is helpless.
* Traditionalists believed that the dead would be reborn in terms of other creatures like water bodies, mountains and animals while in Christianity the resurrected body is spiritual.
* Africans took life here after to be a carbon copy of the present life that is peasants lived as peasants and kings as kings while in Christianity, there is equality of all souls in eternal life.

 **PREPARATION FOR UNENDING LIFE IN AFRICAN TRADITIONAL SOCIETY**

* Every one conducted him/herself well in order to have good life after death. This is because in African tradition they believed that the way one lived on earth determined his destination after death.
* People offered prayers to ancestors and gods to guide them and protect them against bad spirits after death. For example, the Baganda would pray through Muwanga, Kibuuka and Mukasa.
* Ceremonies and rites of passage were performed during one’s life so that one got a good reception in the next world. For example, circumcision rite among the Gishu and death rights among the Baganda.
* They established a good relationship with the ancestors by respecting their burial grounds and offering to them sacrifices.
* They also respected sacred places and objects such as shrines, sacred trees, forests, lakes and rivers to prevent getting punished by gods after death.
* Some Africans dedicated/devoted their entire lives to the service of gods as diviners, medicine men and women, and rain makers to prepare for life after death.
* They also prepared for life after death through producing children. This enabled them to overcome death and be able to carry on the family name. Children were seen as a replacement of the dead in traditional Africa.
* They observed their traditional norms and practices so that they would have a better life in the next world. This prevented curses from the ancestors and kept them in good terms with the people.
* They also prepared for life here after by naming their children names of ancestors/gods who would welcome them and guide them in the spiritual world. For example, the Baganda named children names of gods like Musoke, Mukasa, Dungu and Kibuuka.
* Funeral rites were performed and the dead were given heirs to show continuity of life. This was common among the Baganda, Basoga and Banyankole.
* The Africans also shared with the dead so as to keep a good relationship with them in preparation for life here after. In some communities, the first lamp of food, local beer and water were given to the ancestors.
* They also buried people with property to avail them with the needs for the next world.
* African traditionalists also fought uncleanliness through sprinkling of herbs, washing, shading of blood as a way of preparing for life after death.
* Songs and dances where performed in a religious context. They named and had traditional names for God e.g. Ruhanga, Mukama, Mugabe, Dunda Namugereka, katonda and Liso Dene.
* By wearing fetishes on arms, waists which were made of beads, sticks, strings for protection from evil spirits and give luck to the user. Africans believed that God was involved in all relationships and this is why they gave hospitality to strangers as it was similar to a sacrifice.

 **THE ROLE OF THE ANCESTORS/LIVING DEAD IN TRADITIONAL AFRICA**

* Ancestors were physically departed members of the family who were believed to have joined another world after death.
* In traditional Africa, the family was directly connected to the ancestral generation and these ancestors played a vital role for the existence of the family in question as seen below;
* The acted as mediators between gods and the living. The living would communicate to gods/God through the ancestral spirits and vice versa.
* They acted as patrons to different groups pf people and to different sections of life. For example, among the Baganda Kibuuka was a patron of fighters, Dungu of the hunters and Mukasa of the fisher men.
* Ancestors gave blessings to people in traditional Africa which included giving birth to children, a lot of wealth and good health.
* Ancestors acted as custodians of family traditions, practices, norms and values. That is why they were consulted before performing or changing them.
* They also protected people from all sorts of danger such as invasions, drought, famine and fierce animals. That is why in some societies they were consulted when people were going for long journeys.
* They helped in the choice of marriage partners as they were consulted to approve the marriage and marriage hardly took place less their approval.
* Ancestors also acted as a police to the living by maintaining peace and stability in the community, identifying trouble causers and punishing them.
* They also helped in judging of difficult cases where the elders had to involve them through oracles which helped to identify the actual offenders so that they could be punished.
* They promoted good behaviour by blessing associating and helping those who behaved well in society.
* The ancestors inspired the living in acts of heroism. The living based on the achievements of their ancestors to work hard and defend their community at all costs for the development of their society.
* Ancestors also directed the people during the choice of their leaders and sometimes directly chose leaders is traditional Africa. They also approved those who were to become leaders. For example, among the Baganda during the coronation ceremony, all ancestors were called to approve the new king.
* They acted as advisers and directed the diviners, medicine men and women rain makers during their work.
* They acted as foretellers and warned people of the impeding danger in their communities.
* They interceded for the living before gods and sked gods to forgive people and grant them good and blessed life.

 **CAUSES OF DEATH IN AFRICAN TRADITIONAL**

* In case one was disrespectful to sacred places; objects set aside for religious purposes
* Violation of oath made by people.
* Violation of taboos e.g. marrying a close relative, insulting elders, use of vulgar language
* Dishonouring the mighty places of God through either words or deeds.
* Violation of the blood pact could result into a penalty of death
* Failure to respect senior elders such as fathers, mothers, aunts and grandparents who may curse him leading to death
* Evil deeds of a living relative such as rape, murder, night dancing
* Witchcraft inform of destructive magical words, poisoning the food of a victim
* Violation of rituals
* A person who does not have the good will of his society may suffer physically to the point of death
* Divine will of gods
* Failure to share with the living dead was another reason that could lead to death.
* Getting power, prestige and wealth through wrong means
* curses by his relatives or from gods during child hood.
* killing of innocent people and gods would be taking revenge.
* Use of sacred trees as fire wood yet according to African tradition this is not supposed to be the case.
* Sexual immorality such as committing incest or any other immorality with a wrong person.

 **What Traditional Africans did to defeat death?**

* Traditional Africans lived in harmony through this they were able to prevent wars and conflicts that could lead to their death.
* Traditional Africans migrated to other areas and this was living their homesteads to go in a different land due to calamities like, drought that could easily lead to death.
* They consulted the ancestral spirits and through this the spirits possessed the people and were able to send their messages to the community through these people and those that listened to the message were able to defeat death.
* They offered sacrifices to the gods and through this were able to appease the gods and once the gods were on their sides all could go well and even death could be defeated.
* They respected the living dead and this was done through speaking positive facts about them because these living dead had the capacity to bless and curse and they knew if a curse befell one a result could be death.
* They respected the elders because they believed that 1st they were with the spirits and also they had stayed on earth especially in the particular community for a long time and hence knew the do’s that could lead to death and what to do at a particular time to defeat death.
* They could seek forgiveness whenever they had done wrong and through this were able to reverse curses of evil act from the person and through this were able to defeat death.
* They could seek blessings from the ancestral spirits and when their request was granted they were able to defeat death.
* They planted food to eat during time of famine hence reducing on the starvation in Africa that could lead to death.
* They used herbs i.e. traditional medicine especially in times when they were sick. They also used protective charms that could always protect them from evil people’s acts for example putting beads around one’s waist.
* They ensured that they had standing armies for example in Buganda the first three male children in a family were to join the army.
* They respected traditional customs, norms and values that were accepted by the ancestral spirits of the community and hence to be followed to prevent death for example when it came to burials the position in which the person was buried was considered. Among the Basoga the body could be buried facing Bunyoro because they believed it is where they came from or could torment them hence death.

**TRADITIONAL BURIAL CEREMONY**

* The burial was performed properly because the dead were assumed to continue living in the next world.
* People became powerful after death, so the living would guard themselves against bad relationship with the dead by giving them a decent burial.
* The ceremony started immediately when someone died and the first people to be informed were the elders who would come and prepare the body for unending life.
* The body was washed/ cleaned sometimes using certain herbs and this was done to enable the dead enter the new life when clean so as to warmly be received by the ancestors.
* In some societies the hair was shaved and nails cut off to purify the dead. In Buganda for instance, people were buried without plaited hair.
* Some smeared the body with Vaseline or ghee like among the pastoral communities and the body was dressed properly.
* The body then was rolled in the bark cloth to give protection to it and keep it warm.
* In other communities, animal skins were used such as cows, and goat skins. This was done to show respect to the body and to protect the body.
* Fire was made in the compound of the dead to keep a funeral for the dead and this lasted for some days. This fire was light by specific persons and was left burning until it went off by itself.
* The grave was dug in a garden or plantation while in other tribes like the Adhola it was dug in the compound in order to keep the spirit of the dead near them.
* The grave sometimes was dug by special people or relatives of the dead and they were usually men except in Buganda for the child born dead, the grave was dug by old women.
* Ornaments and chains were removed from the body so as to make the body comfortable.
* In some societies, the dead were buried with material items used in daily life. For instance, men were buried with walking sticks, pipes, spears and among the Karamojong, they were buried with brooms.
* Women were buried with saucepans, bowls and among the Karamojong, they were buried with needles. Those items were expected to be used in the next world.
* The body was buried at a specific time. Some like children were buried in the morning so as to start the journey earlier while others like elders were buried in the afternoon so as to be picked by the ancestors and go with them.
* The dead were buried in a particular position for example, in some societies they were buried facing the home stead so that they could continue protecting the family members.
* In some societies, sacrifices were offered before and after the burial to control the spirits from revenging against the living.

 **SPECIFIC BURIAL CEREMONY AMONG THE BAGANDA**

* Death in Buganda was considered as a departure of someone but not completed
* When one died all the society members had to mourn.
* Shelter were availed to the mourners
* It was made of poles and leaves all local materials
* Immediately after the death, dry poles were collected and fire was lit
* Relatives of the deceased had to tie pieces of back clothes around their waist this indicated that the loss had been indeed a setback.
* Food was cooked right away from the 1st day till the last day to keep the mourners going.
* People were stopped eating from near the dead since this would anger the spirit of the dead.
* The mourners had to sleep outside in the court yard near the burning fire. This action assign of unity in sad period.
* In case the dead was married the in-laws were not supposed to participate in the cleaning of the corpse.
* The grave was rectangular dug and women were exempted from digging.
* The body was wrapped in a black cloth symbolizing their traditional back cloth
* Children of the deceased was to take bath only after the burial of the dead.
* Cutting of nails.
* Trimming of hair.
* Padding done by women.
* Those who had no child, an exit would be created on the house so as to take them out.

**UNENDING LIFE IN THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH**

* The apostles preached the good news about unending life which had come through the risen Christ who had lived with them.
* The gift of life was for all those who believed that eternal life begins here and now.
* St. Paul strongly stressed the fact of Jesus’ resurrection 1corithians 15 and made the Corinthians accept the fact of Jesus’ resurrection and their own body resurrection.
* Some Corinthians had failed to understand the meaning of resurrection that is why Paul emphasized that if Christ rose from the dead, then Christians’ resurrection from the dead is also possible.
* The good news about life after death was preached by the apostles and even when they were persecuted, they continued to tell the message about the gift of eternal life extended to all believers through the death and resurrection of Christ.

 **UNENNDING LIFE IN THE MIDDLE AGES**

* During this time wrong ideas cropped into the church for instance, there was distorted teaching about the doctrine of pre destination.
* According to the teaching God had already chosen those going to heaven and those condemned to hell. Therefore, a person had no role to play for his salvation accept waiting for his/her fate.
* The people considered God as a cruel harsh judge assigning few people to heaven and very many to hell. Therefore, people under took severe repentance.
* During this time many people feared death and had great fear for sickness.
* Parents feared for their babies who died before they had been baptized because to them they were going to hell.
* Churches were decorated with drawn pictures of those in hell suffering and angels were drawn entertaining those in heaven.
* This period of fearing death was characterized by constant punishment and abuses in church. For instance, there was corruption through the sale of indulgences by church leaders. Indulgence is a provision where punishment for sin can fully or partially be removed leading to shortening a person’s stay in purgatory.
* People had to pay money in order to be prayed for as a result they were encouraged to give in money in exchange for forgiveness instead of repenting.
* The rich paid money to church leaders to have masses said for them after death. However, all these activities were condemned after reformation.
* There were some people who had a better understanding of life after death and considered death as a gate way to heaven.
* St. Francis of Assis welcomed death and referred to it as a little sister. His faith was rooted in his great love for Christ and for all God’s creation.
* Julian the English lady had less fear for death because of the assurance of God’s love.

**BIBLE TEACHING ON UNENDING LIFE**

**The Old Testament teaching;**

Life is a God given gift as seen in the creation accounts however, it is threatened by death which came as a result of man’s sin in genesis 3:

The Old Testament teachings about life after death are very limited because of the fear they people had for death. So their belief for life here after kept on changing time after time.

At first they believed that after death one went to a place called sheol where one had a shadow kind of existence with no real life.

Sheol was believed to be a place where there was no work, no reasoning, no knowledge and wisdom.

In the book of Ecclesiastes 9:5-10, the living had hope but the dead were hopeless.

The Israelites believed that God was for the living rather than the dead. That is why King Hezekiah feared to die and cried to God to add him some years because he wanted to remain with God and friends.

Because of fear for death the Israelites enjoyed to the maximum and produced many children.

Later, the Israelites developed a positive attitude towards death. They believed that man could still live after death that is why some of them opted for death. Daniel 3: 8-25, The three friends to Daniel that is Meshach, Shadrach and Abednego were ready to die by being thrown in a blazing furnace because they opted for Israel’s God instead of worshiping a statue god.

In 2maccabes the Jewish mother together with her seven sons were killed because of remaining faithful to the Jewish customs rather than eating pork as the gentile king had ordered them.

The Old Testament teaches that faithful people are recorded in the book of life and will have everlasting life because God remains with the faithful even after death. Daniel 12: 1-5.

The Old Testament teaches that God who created people on earth will continue to love them even after death.

 The Old Testament teaches that those who die in God remain with him as their God even after death. For example, when God called Moses He identified Himself as the God of his fore fathers Abraham Isaac and Jacob.

The Old Testament teaches that will be rejected and thrown out of God’s presence and the righteous will be recorded in the book of life.

The Old Testament teaches that righteous will leave even when they die while the wicked will die in their wickedness. Ezekiel 18:

The raising of the widow’s son by prophet Elijah teaches that life after death is a gift from God to those with faith.

The Old Testament teaches that there is resurrection of the dead at the end of life. God told Ezekiel to prophesy to the dry bones so as to get back their flesh and life and it was done. Ezekiel 37:

 **NEW TESTAMENT TEACHING ON UNENDING LIFE**

* It is the life of joy and glory with God
* Eternal life begins before death and it is by accepting Jesus as your savior
* It begins here and now (John 5:19-24, 3:16)
* It means living in openness to God and fellow man (Luke 10:25-28)
* It is communion with God and fellow man
* Showing concern for those in need i.e. fellowship with fellow men (Luke 16:19-29)
* The Holy Communion is both a sign and source of eternal life
* Real eternal life is only experienced in God’s kingdom
* Jesus’ resurrection is the basis of eternal life
* Eternal life is a reward to those who believe in Christ
* Death is a gate way to eternal life
* Repentance and reconciliation leads to eternal life
* It is for the faithful ones who preserve persecution and suffering
* There is judgment before one enters eternal life on how good one was on earth

 **How does Jesus show that there is unending life?**

* Jesus’ resurrection is proof that there is life after death
* In the story of Lazarus and the rich man
* Jesus raised people from the dead e.g. Lazarus
* The promise of His second coming
* In John, Jesus refers to Abraham as living in heaven
* Jesus says, he is the way, the truth and the life
* He promised to go and prepare a place in His father’s house
* Jesus spoke to Moses alive (transfiguration)
* Through his parables e.g. a seed dies
* The fact that the living and the dead shall be raised again for judgment day.
* As promised the robber to be with him in the kingdom is the bread of life
* Through sharing in the holy communion, we are already preparing for landing life
* No marriage at resurrection
* Jesus conquered death on the cross

**QUESTIONS**

**1.a) How does Jesus’ life give assurance for eternal life?**

* By believing that Jesus is the resurrection of life
* Jesus conquered death by resurrecting to life
* Through loving God and our neighbor by living in openness to God and neighbor
* By sharing the Eucharist is a source of eternal life
* Trusting and believing in God also gives hope for eternal life
* By being born again with water and the spirit, there is hope for eternal life
* Jesus’ resurrection brings hope in eternal life for all who believe in him
* Having fellowship and caring for those in need the story of the rich man and Lazarus

b) **Why should a Christian sing praises instead of mourning when a fellow Christian dies?**

* They know that life goes on after death and it’s indeed a better life
* Being baptized as a Christian is an assurance of sharing in the life of Jesus so there is no need of crying
* Jesus assured all those who follow him that they will rise from the dead just like he did
* Christ raised Lazarus from the dead and this is an example of Jesus’ power over death
* Death is only a temporal separation with the deceased
* Knowledge that a person who died was a faithful follower of Jesus makes Christian confident that Christ will surely raise him from the dead
* Those who die before us will always pray for us
* Eternal happiness is what the deceased is to enjoy after death so praise be to God

**2. a) As a Christian what reasons can you advance to convince secular people that life after death is real?**

* Death is only a gate way to eternal life
* Jesus conquered death by resurrection
* There is a judgment day
* Jesus’ miracle show life after death
* God continues to love and protect his people
* The wicked will be rejected
* Righteous will be written in the book of life
* Through suffering and perseverance on earth, we get eternal life
* God is for both living and dead
* Eucharist a source eternal life
* Helping/severing others in need is a source/hope in life here after
* Believing in Christ/accepting his gospel gives hope in life here after
* Parousia

**b) What is the church doing to enable people access eternal life?**

* The church is living a prayerful life
* The church is calling people to repent
* The church is preaching the word of God to the people
* The church is sharing her belongings with others
* The church is helping the needy/charity to others
* The church is comforting and counseling the wicked
* Accepting baptism i.e. accept Jesus’ salvation
* Condemning evil in society e.g. sexual abuses, child abuses etc
* Partaking Holy communion
* The church is composing songs

**3. a) How were the Traditional Africans prepared for unending life**

**b) Give the Old Testament teaching about unending life.**