

Contraception

Artificial – man made e.g. condom

Natural – a type of practice or behaviour aimed at preventing pregnancy e.g. NFP (natural family planning)

Christianity teaches that sex should be open to the possibility of **procreation**. Therefore, by using contraception, you are preventing procreation from happening. **The Roman Catholic Church** teaches that the use of contraception is a sin. **The Church of England** teaches that sex should open to procreation, however, it accepts that sex is also an **expression of love** and promotes **responsible parenthood**. Therefore, the use of contraception is encouraged if you cannot properly look after an raise a child. You should wait until you're ready.

Muslims do not agree with sex before marriage and therefore the use of contraception to prevent pregnancy before marriage. Islam accepts the use of contraception for married couples who wish to plan pregnancies or prevent the spread of sexually transmitted infections.

Families

- **Nuclear** – mum & dad + children
- **Extended** – Nuclear family + other relatives
- **Single-parent** – mum or dad + children
- **Polygamy** – illegal in the UK. Man + more than 1 wife

Many people would argue that the best place for raising children is within a family environment/ Religious families also provide a basis for a religious upbringing, enabling parents to educate their child in a faith.

Theme A: Relationships & families

Sexual relationships

Roman Catholics believe that sex should have 2 purposes: to **UNITE** a couple in married love and to **CREATE** new life. **Pre-marital** sex is a sin, as is masturbation (as it cannot lead to procreation). Some other Christians accept sex before marriage in a committed and loving relationship, as it is an **expression of love**. The Bible says "Do not commit **adultery**", so having sex with someone other than your marriage partner is committing a **sin**.

Islam teaches that it is a religious duty to marry & have children. Every person should be a virgin before marriage, and observe **chastity** before and during marriage.

Gender equality

Traditionally, men have held positions of authority in most religions. However, there is a debate about what the role of women should be. In the **RC Church** women cannot become priests. Many argue this because: Jesus had male disciples; Jesus chose a man to lead his Church after his ascension (Peter); A woman cannot completely represent Christ during the Eucharist. In the **C of E** women can become both vicars and bishops.

Some of the earliest converts to Christianity were women, for example Priscilla at Ephesus.

"There is neither Jew nor gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and females, for you are all one in Christ" (Galatians 3:28)

"So God created mankind in His own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them" (Genesis 1:27)

Homosexual relationships

For some Christians, **homosexual** sex is thought to be unnatural and cannot lead to pregnancy, so it is a sin and it is wrong. In places, the Bible also says it is wrong for a man to sleep with another man, which has also been used to show that homosexuality is wrong.

Roman Catholics believe that it is ok to be in a homosexual relationship but the couple should remain '**chaste**' as sex should be for the purpose of procreation.

Anglicans believe that the Bible should be interpreted for the modern day and as long as the couple are **committed** to each other then **love** is the most important thing.

Marriage & divorce

Marriage is a sacrament in some Christian traditions; it brings a blessing from god. In marriage, a couple promise to each other through **vows**/promises, to be good to each other, to be faithful, to love and cherish each other, until the marriage is ended by death. The rings represent the eternal bond the couple are entering into, in front of God.

For **RC** Christians, divorce is always wrong. Marriage is a sacrament which cannot be broken. The vows state **"until death do us part"** and these promises are binding.

It is possible to have an **annulment**, which is where the marriage is set aside, as if it were never real.

For most other Christians, divorce is discouraged but acceptable as a last resort. It is sometimes the **lesser of two evils**, and also a **necessary** evil.

Christianity teaches:

- God hates divorce (OT)
- "Whoever divorces... then marries another; it as if he committed adultery" (Jesus)
- We should forgive those who wrong us and show love to all (Jesus)

Euthanasia

Euthanasia is illegal in the UK, It can be seen as assisted suicide, therefore breaking the **Suicide Act of 1961**. It can be viewed as manslaughter or murder and carries a prison sentence.

Some people believe that people should have the right to end their own life if they are terminally ill, incapacitated or in severe pain. This is known as euthanasia. In the UK, this is currently against the law, although in some other countries it is legal (Switzerland, Netherlands and Belgium). Some Christians believe that people should not be able to end their own life because all life is sacred, and that the terminally ill should be cared for in **hospices** at the end of their lives.

Muslims believe that life should be preserved at all costs and so Euthanasia goes against God.

Active euthanasia: being given lethal drugs to end a persons life so there illness does not kill them.

Passive euthanasia: a person stops taking medication to end their life.

Sanctity of Life

Many religions believe that life is **sacred** because God created it, including Islam and Christianity.

Christians believe that all life is sacred, and precious. Some Christians do not believe that anyone should take their own life or the life of someone else. Therefore some Christians believe that euthanasia and abortion is wrong, as it is wrong to end a human life. In all legal systems **murder** is the worst crime you could commit.

Theme B: Religion and Life

The Use of Animals

Many medicines are tested on animals before they can be used on humans to ensure that they are safe. This is very controversial because many people think that it cruel and unnecessary. However others believe that animal experimentation is necessary to make breakthroughs in science and technology, and to manufacture effective cures. For example many surgical procedures such as transplantation surgery were traditionally perfected on animals.

Christians and Muslims are allowed to eat meat in their diets, although Muslims do not eat pork and some Christians fast during Lent. **Vegetarian:** a person who does not eat meat.

Abortion

The law defines abortion as *“the deliberate expulsion of a foetus from the womb, with the intention of destroying it”*. In the UK abortion is allowed up until 24 weeks of a pregnancy under special circumstances, i.e. if two registered doctors agree that there is a danger to the women’s mental or physical health, the foetus will be born with disabilities, or the mental or physical health of existing children will be put at risk. Some people do not believe that abortion is right because it means terminating the life of an unborn child. However, many people believe that it is the woman who should have the choice as to what happens to her body and therefore it is for her to make up her own mind. There are also circumstances such as rape, genetic abnormalities or failed contraception which cause debate on both sides of the argument.

Some Christians believe that the life of the mother takes precedence – she is a fully developed human with responsibilities, whereas the foetus is not even born and will need everything doing for it.

Other Christians believe that life begins at the moment of **conception** and therefore abortion is equivalent to murder.

Pro-Life: term used for arguments against abortion

Pro-choice: arguments in favour of having the CHOICE to choose an abortion

Origins of the Universe and Life

Some Christians believe that the universe was created by God in 7 days. This is described in the bible in the book of **Genesis**. The bible says that Adam and Eve were the first man and women. Christians who believe the literal truth of the bible are known as **Creationists**. Other Christians think the creation story is a metaphor for the creation of the Universe, but do not believe that the world was created in 7 days.

Scientists believe that the Universe was created billions of years ago and is constantly evolving. This is known as **the Big Bang Theory**. **Charles Darwin** was a famous scientist who came up with the theories of evolution and natural selection. This theory explains that humans are descended from apes and that species are constantly evolving to adapt to their changing environment.

Stewardship: the idea that God created the world and that humans have a responsibility to look after it.

Dominion: the belief that God gave humans the right to decide what happens to the world and the species in it.

Violence & Terrorism

Violence & protest: Jesus taught his followers that violence is wrong; he said **“blessed are the peacemakers”** and told them to **“turn the other cheek”** in the face of violence. Some Christians and Muslims take the view that violent protest may be needed to stop extreme injustice e.g. to oppose a dictator. Others promote non-violent protest e.g. **Martin Luther King**, who changed the law in America through non-violent protest.

Terrorism: No religions support terrorism even as a form of protest as it causes suffering to the innocents – “Do not kill”. Terrorism can never be lesser Jihad as it involves the death of women, children and damage to the environment.

Justice, forgiveness & reconciliation

Justice: There are 2 elements to justice – making right a situation which has been unjust, and to carry out a fight in the right way.

Forgiveness & reconciliation: For Christians forgiveness & reconciliation is a key part of their faith. There are stories about people like Connie Ten Boom; who was a victims of war but forgave those who caused her suffering. Coventry Cathedral has a state to reconcile (bring back together) the UK and Japan.

Theme D: Religion, peace & conflict

Religion as a cause of war

It is definitely true that religion is involved in war e.g. Syria where Sunni fight Shia. Religion has also divided people – Catholics vs the Church of England in the 1600’s. It is also true that religions do allow it’s followers to fight but often teachings are taken out of context used to justify violence e.g. **“an eye for an eye....life for a life”, but Jesus later said “your have heard it said and eye for an eye but I tell you now if someone slaps you on the right cheek turn the other to him also”**

However religious teachings themselves do not cause war, in fact they discourage it **“put away your swords”**

Holy war, Just War & Jihad

Holy War (also see Jihad): Holy war is war in the name of God for example the Crusades (1095-1291) where Christians fought to reclaim Jerusalem as they believed it was their Holy City and that Muslim Turks were enemies of God. Today the Church does not support Holy War.

Just War: conditions which make it acceptable for Christians to participate in war. These include

- **The war is declared by an authority such as the government.**
 - **Innocent civilians are protected as far as possible.**
 - **War must be a last resort**
 - **War must have a clear aim which includes stopped evil.**
 - **The must be reasonable chance of winning.**
 - **The outcomes needs to be that peace is restored.**

Just war is necessary to allow Christians to fight against greater evil and be involved in breaking the commandment “Do not kill”

Jihad: lesser jihad means holy war. Muslims are commanded to fight in order to protect their own religion and protect the lives of innocents. However Muslims are not permitted to be aggressive **“Fight in the name of Allah, those who fight you, but do not transgress limits”**

There are certain conditions that must be met if fighting can be called jihad, these include:

- **Innocent women, children and the elderly must no be involved.**
 - **The environment must not be damaged by fighting**
 - **Fighting must stop if another side seeks peace.**
 - **It must be declared by a legitimate authority.**

Weapons of mass destruction

Weapons of mass destruction include: Nuclear Weapons, biological & chemical warfare and radiological weapons.

Religious views: No religion agrees with the use of weapons of mass destruction, they are too extreme and uncontrollable. Their use would break one of the conditions of Just War and lesser Jihad.

They believe in the **Sanctity of life** and use of these weapons goes completely against this belief.

Some religious people agree with developing nuclear weapons as a way of **detering** countries from going to war.

Religion Peace & Pacifism

Peace should be the aim for all religions. It is a **state of harmony between all people**. Many Christians are pacifists (refusing to use violence) who work for peace. Important Christian pacifists are the **Quakers and Martin Luther King**. During wars Quakers refuse to fight but may get involved in helping the victims of war. Some Christians argue that Jesus was a pacifist as he refused to use violence even in self defence.

Victims of war

The Red Cross is a Christian organisation set up to assist victims of war, including soldiers, it has spread to other religions e.g. the Red Crescent. It is based on the teaching of **“love your neighbour”**

Aims of punishment

Retribution: is the least positive of the 3 aims of punishment. It means that society, on behalf of the victim, is getting its own back on the offender. In the Old Testament it is referred to as *lex talionis* (the law of retaliation). **“An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth”**

Deterrence: This is the belief that if offenders are seen to be punished for wrongdoing, then this may ‘put off’ others from committing that offence. The offender themselves might also be put off from reoffending.

Reformation: This is the aim of punishment most Christians prefer because it seeks to help offenders by working with them to help them understand that their behaviour is harming society. It is hoped that offenders will change their attitudes and become responsible, law-abiding members of the community.

Good & evil actions and intentions

Some people suggest that those who commit the worst crimes are evil.

But where does evil come from?

Christianity: Evil is seen as the abuse of the **free will** God gave to humans. In order to be able to appreciate good, then evil has to exist. Most Christians believe in a figure called **the devil** or Satan. So, evil is a combination of internal and external factors.

Islam: Evil is also seen as the abuse of freewill, however Muslims believe that humans can be led astray by **Shaytan**. They also believe that on judgment day you will be judged on your intentions as well as your actions; and evil action with good intention will be treated more kindly.

Theme E: Religion, crime and punishment

Reasons for crime & types of crime

Causes of crime include: *upbringing, mental illness, poverty, opposition to existing laws, greed/hate, or addiction.*

There are 3 key **types** of crimes: *Crimes against the **person** (e.g. murder); Crimes against **property** (e.g. burglary); Crimes against the **state** (e.g. terrorism).*

St Paul tells Christians to *“obey the laws of the land”*

Suffering

For many people, suffering is an unfortunate part of living. It may be caused by something natural, such as an illness, or it may be due to how people have behaved. Whatever the cause, Christians believe they should try to help others who are suffering. Christians feel that they should follow the example of Jesus, who helped many whom he saw were suffering, and who taught that those who believe in God should help those who suffer.

Heller Keller was a Christian writer and activist who became deaf and blind when she was only 19 months old. She said *“We are never really happy until we try to brighten the lives of others”.*

Treatment of criminals

Christians do not disagree with discipline. They see a positive need for it: **“He who spares the rod hates their children, but the one who loves their children is careful to discipline them”.** However, they may question the method used since Jesus’ teachings on love and caring for people rule out any physical punishment. Instead, Christians focus on positive sanctions that help offenders to realise the error of their ways and reform. Jesus always treated people with respect, and Christians believe they should follow his example.

Corporal punishment: to punish the offender by causing physical pain. It is illegal in the UK but allowed in some other parts of the world. For example some Muslim countries such as Iran and Saudi Arabia, allow caning as punishment for offences such as gambling and sexual promiscuity.

Community service: offers offenders a chance to make up for what they have done and receive help in reforming their behaviour. Christians are in general agreement that it is a suitable punishment for fairly minor offences.

The death penalty

Abolished in the UK in 1965 and is now illegal in many EU countries.

The Principle of Utility = an action is right if it promotes the maximum happiness for the maximum number of people.

The sanctity of life = God gave life, so only He has the right to take it away.

| For | Against |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• It is a justifiable retribution for serious crimes• It is a deterrent• It gives the victim’s family a sense of justice | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Only God has the right to take life• Jesus taught a message of love and forgiveness• It is hypocritical |

Forgiveness

Forgiveness is a core Christian belief and one Jesus emphasised in his teachings.

Christians are expected to be forgiving towards those who wrong them, if they expect to be forgiven themselves: **“Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us”.**

Many Christians would argue that forgiveness is not a replacement for punishment.

During his ministry Jesus was asked how many times you should forgive someone who wrongs you and he replied **“I tell you not seven times, but seventy-seven times”**