

Theme A: Relationships & families

Sexual relationships

Roman Catholics believe that sex should have TWO purposes: 1. to **UNITE** a couple in married love 2. to **CREATE** new life. **Pre-marital** sex is a sin, as is masturbation (as it cannot lead to procreation).

SOME Christians accept sex before marriage in a committed and loving relationship, as it is an **expression of love**, particularly if the couple are intending marriage.

The Bible says **“Do not commit adultery”**, so having sex with someone other than your marriage partner is committing a **sin**.

“Anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”

“Every sexual act must be within the framework of marriage.”

Contraception

Artificial – man made e.g. **condom, pill, injection**

Natural – a type of practice or behaviour aimed at preventing pregnancy e.g. NFP (natural family planning). The **rhythm method** would fall under this category.

Christianity teaches that sex should be open to the possibility of **procreation**. Therefore, by using contraception, you are preventing this from happening.

The **Roman Catholic Church** teaches that the use of contraception is a sin as the couple are not being open to new life.

“Every sexual act should have the possibility of creating new life.”

CoE 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.

♀ 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 **Roman Catholic 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 **CoE** 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)

The command to **love ones neighbour** means that **discrimination** is wrong. Jesus treated women with respect, welcomes them as disciples.

Some traditional Christians believe that men are the head of the family and that women should mainly stay at home. **“Your desire will be for you husband, and he will rule over you.”**

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. **“You shall not lie with a male as with a woman; it is an abomination.”**

Many Christians see **heterosexual** relationships as part of God's plan for humans. **Genesis** says that a man and woman should be united together and increase in number.

The **Catholic Church** teaches that homosexual people are not sinful because of their homosexuality, but they should remain **chaste** (not have sex) to avoid sinful acts.

The **CoE** welcomes homosexual Christians who live in a faithful, committed relationship, but it does NOT allow them to marry in church.

Marriage

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.

“The couple should love each other as Christ loved the Church.”

“That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.”

Marriage is a sacrament (agreement) before God in which the couple promises to live faithfully till death.

TASK: Explain what the purpose of marriage is for Christians.

Divorce & re-marriage

Divorce: Legal ending of a marriage

Re-marriage: Someone marries again while their former husband/wife is still alive.

Annulment: Catholic Church ruling stating that a marriage was never valid.

For **Roman Catholics**, 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. This means the marriage is permanent, exclusive and lifelong.

For **OTHER** Christians, divorce is discouraged but acceptable as a last resort. It is sometimes the *lesser of two evils*, and also a *necessary* evil. They think the Church should reflect God’s forgiveness and allow couples a second chance for happiness.

The **Eastern Orthodox Church** grants divorces and remarries couples, but usually not more than twice.

Christian teachings:

- *“God hates divorce.”*
- *“Whoever divorces... then marries another; it as if he committed adultery.” (Jesus)*
- *“If a man divorces his wife for any cause other than unchastity (unfaithfulness) he involves her in adultery.”*
- *“What God has joined together, let no one separate.”*

It is possible to have an **annulment**, which is where the marriage is set aside, as if it were never real. This means they are free to marry again in church.

Cohabitation

Christians who are opposed to sex before marriage believe **cohabitation** is sinful.

Many **Anglican** and **Protestant** Christians accept that although marriage is best, people may live together in a faithful, loving and committed way without being married.

The **Orthodox** Church is opposed to any recognition of sexual relationship outside a Christian marriage.

Nature of families

- **Nuclear** – Mum & dad + children
- **Extended** – Nuclear family + other relatives
- **Single-parent** – mum or dad + children
- **Polygamy** – Illegal in the UK. Custom of having more than one wife at the same time.
- **Bigamy** – Offence of marrying someone while already married to another person.
- **Same-sex** – People of the same-sex who are raising children together.
- **Stepfamily** – Family that is formed on the remarriage of a divorced/widowed person

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.

“Anyone who does not provide for their relatives, and especially their own household, has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.”

“Honour your father and mother.”

Purpose of families

Role of parents

Good parents love, care and raise their children to know right from wrong.

The **Catholic Church** describes parenting like this:

“Here one learns endurance and the joy of work [...] love, generous – and even repeated – forgiveness, and above all divine worship and prayer and the offering of one’s life.”

Purpose

An important role of Christian parents is educating children in their faith. For Christians, a family reflects the relationship of Christ and Church:

“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her.”

Both parents and children have a responsibility to one another. Christians believe their children are a gifts from God.

“Children are a heritage from the LORD, offspring a reward for him.”

“Children, obey your parents in everything, for this please the Lord.”

Exam Practice

Give ONE religious belief about the purpose of families. [1 mark]

Explain TWO different beliefs in contemporary British society about same-sex marriage. [4 marks]

Explain TWO religious beliefs about the nature of marriage. [6 marks]

Explain TWO religious beliefs about divorce. [6 marks]

‘Marriage is a proper place to enjoy a sexual relationship.’ [12 marks]

‘It is wrong for religious couples to use artificial contraception within marriage.’ [12 marks]