

# 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 TWO religious beliefs about the purpose of families. [2 marks]

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

Explain TWO religious beliefs about the nature of marriage. [5 marks]

Explain TWO religious beliefs about divorce. [5 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]