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PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Christian relationships should be built on the teachings of the New Testament. Jesus was interested in human relationships, how we treat ourselves, friends, lovers, family, strangers, etc. The life of Jesus is the model for Christians. The basis of Jesus' teaching on relationships are : love, forgiveness and reconciliation.

LOVE

4 types of love

Storge - warm affection of liking something e.g. *I love the rain* or *I love chocolate*

Eros - sexual affection, passion or desire, e.g. *I really fancy xxx*

Philia - love of friends or family, e.g. *I love my mum* or *best friend*

Agape - unconditional, spiritual love - charity, respect, tolerance, wanting the best for all people, no matter who they are or what they have done. This is the love that Jesus taught. Love all people because they are also made in the image of God, and loved by God - just like you.

The Bible and Love:

Jesus often tried to explain the love we should show one another:

"Treat others as you would like them to treat you" (the golden rule), *Matthew 7:12*

"Love your enemies" *Matthew 5:44*

"You shall love God with all your heart, and all your soul and all your strength. You shall love your neighbour as yourself, there is no greater commandment than these." *Mark 12:28-31*

"If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' love those who love them." *Luke 6:32*

This means we should love all people, especially those it is most difficult to love.

St. Paul's definition of love is the perfect basis for all relationships

"Love is patient, Love is kind and envies no one. Love is never boastful nor conceited, nor rude, never selfish, not quick to take offence, Love keeps no score of wrongs; does not gloat over other men's sins, but delights in the truth. There is nothing that love cannot face; there is no limit to its faith; its hope and endurance. Love will never come to an end."

1 Corinthians 13:4-8

Christians believe we are all "children of God", made in the image of God (*Genesis 1:26*). We should love and accept ourselves, and not go in for self-hatred and self-denial. Our duty in life is to do the will of God, be the best person that we can, and use the talents we have been given to their maximum potential.

Christians believe that God is the source of all love. Where love exists, God is there.

Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.

1 John 4:7-8

Christian love is sacrificial - it means giving things up for other people. The best demonstration of this sort of love was Jesus dying on the cross:

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. *Romans 5:8*

FORGIVENESS

Mistakes and errors. As we go through life we will make mistakes and commit "sins". A sin is something that takes us away from God. If we commit a sin, we have a responsibility to try to make amends. If we expect others to forgive us then we must also be willing to forgive others.

The Bible and Forgiveness:

Jesus taught that forgiveness is central to the relationship between God and humans, and between humans. Because we are forgiven, we should forgive others.

"Forgive us this day our sins, as we forgive the sins of others" Lord's prayer - *Matthew 6:12*

Jesus stopped the stoning of a woman caught in adultery and said to those who were stoning her:
"Let you who is without sin cast the first stone" *John 8:7*

"Do not judge for you will be judged ... why do you see the speck in your brother's eye but miss the log in your own?" *Jesus in Matthew 7:1,3*

We have all sinned, and if we want to be forgiven by God, we must forgive others:

If you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins. *Matthew 6:15*

Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?" Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times." *Matthew 18:21-22*

"If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him." *Luke 17:3*

Other teaching about forgiveness includes:

- Jesus died on the cross to pay the price for our sins so that we can be forgiven.
- *1 Corinthians 13* - love does not keep a record of wrongs, i.e. agape love will forgive.
- Marriage vows "for better, for worse" implies forgiveness when we do wrong.
- Jesus told a story about a prodigal son who wasted his inheritance on prostitutes and wild living. When he said sorry to his father, he was forgiven instantly. Christians believe that God loves us like a father and will forgive our sins if we are truly sorry.

'If we confess our sins, he (God) is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.' *1 John 1:9*

This quote from John's letter sums up Jesus' teaching on forgiveness.

FRIENDSHIP

Outside of our families, our friends are the most important influences in our lives.

Friendship in the Bible

Friendship is important in the Bible because friends are vital in shaping us. Christians are encouraged to find Christian friends so they can support each other in their faith. However, Jesus taught that AGAPE love should be shown to all people, not just people we like.

The Bible and Friendship:

The Bible teaches that God wants people to develop friendships and their love for each other.

"Friends always show their love." *Proverbs 17:17*

Jesus' teaching

Jesus formed close friendships with his followers - he called his followers "his friends".

"You are my friends if you do what I command you.... I call you friends, because I have told you everything I have heard from my Father." *John 15:14f*

He taught that the ultimate friendship is to be willing to sacrifice one's own life for a friend.

"This is my commandment: love one another, just as I love you. The greatest love a person can have for his friends is to give his life for them." *John 15:12-14*

Friendship with God

Jesus taught that God was a God of love, with whom it was possible to develop a friendship. Christians try to develop this friendship with God. This relationship with God is found in the Old Testament:

"The Lord would speak with Moses, face to face, just as someone speaks with a friend."

Exodus 33:11

SEX

Key Idea: Sex is a beautiful, natural God given activity but should ideally be confined to the loving stable relationship of marriage.

Sex outside marriage

Sex outside marriage was not as common in the past because of three fears:

1. Detection - getting caught
2. Infection - getting ill
3. Conception - getting pregnant.

Sex outside marriage is now more common because:

Virginity is not considered to be so important; cheap, reliable contraception has made casual sex much easier; education about sex and contraception is better; abortions are easier; casual sex seems to be encouraged, e.g. by the media; fewer people follow religion; adultery is no longer illegal.

However, the results have been very serious:

Physical, emotional and mental harm; STDs are increasing, e.g. AIDS; a massive rise in single-parent families and more children being born outside marriage; young people becoming sexually active at a younger age; divorce rates have risen, resulting broken families; 80% of the UK's annual 200,000 abortions are for single women.

Christian views on sex

1. Jesus and the Bible teach that marriage is the only appropriate place for sex.
2. Most Christians agree that sex should be monogamous, one partner for life, in marriage.
3. The Christian ideal is that a person should be a virgin until they marry.
4. Other Christians say that sex in a stable, committed and loving relationship is acceptable.

Christians are concerned that relationships today are based on sex, not love. They are also worried about the problems casual sex causes for individuals, children and society. Roman Catholics believe the purpose of sex is to join a married couple together and complete their relationship, with the possibility of the birth of children always being present. Sex outside marriage, e.g. living together, is considered by many Christians to be wrong because it interferes with the real purpose of sex as an expression of married love.

MARRIAGE

Marriage is the legal joining together of a man and a woman, for life, to the exclusion of all others.

Two types: Christian / religious marriage, and civil marriage.

Why marry?

To commit yourself to the person you love for a lifetime; to bring up children in a secure and loving home; to control and direct the sex instinct; friendship and companionship through life.

Purpose of Christian marriage

Procreation - having children

Union - a loving partnership of living together

Rearing children - providing nurture & security

Pattern for society - family unit of mutual support

One flesh - sexual intimacy

Sacred - blessed by God

Eternal - lifelong faithful relationship

Marriage and living together

Marriage is not popular as he used to be. The number of couples getting married for the first time has been falling steadily since the 1970s. Many people now choose simply to live together.

Many Christians believe that marriage is better because

- A relationship cannot develop fully without marriage: there is always the fear of rejection and the worry that the other person might suddenly leave.
- Quarrels matter more when couples are not married, because there is no commitment to staying together. Married couples will remember the vows they have made, and may try harder to sort out problems rather than walking away.
- Marriage is the right context for having children; God intends children to be born into families where there are two parents who are married to each other.

Roman Catholic Church: marriage is one of the 7 sacraments, i.e. a symbol of the bond God creates with people.

In marriage, the love between a husband and wife shows something of the love of God.

RC priests must be celibate (not married) and chaste (sexually pure). This allows them to dedicate themselves to their work. In most other Churches the leader is allowed to marry.

Church of England teaches that marriage is a gift from God - see the Introduction above. In marriage, 2 people (male and female) promise to be faithful for life, to love, comfort and honour each other, to stay together no matter what - good and bad, rich and poor, sickness and health. Marriage is also for sex, and to create children and a stable family. Vicars are allowed to marry.

Christians believe that marriage is very important because within marriage, people learn about and express love, forgiveness, tolerance, comforting each other, celebrating together, appreciating each other's qualities, and thinking about the well-being of another person. They believe that through marriage, they learn more about God, because "**God is love**" (1 John 4).

Christian Weddings

Social occasion - a time for families and friends to get together.

Religious occasion - a time for worshipping God, making solemn vows or promises in God's name, thanking God for the gift of love and marriage, celebrating a joyful event in God's presence, praying for the couple's new life together and asking for God's blessing on the couple in the future.

Preparation. If a couple wants to marry in a Christian Church, they are often invited to discuss the meaning of Christian marriage with the priest or minister. They will discuss love and marriage, and make sure they understand what they will be promising to each other.

A Church of England wedding ceremony has 6 main elements

1. **Introduction** explains Christian marriage. Questions asked to ensure the marriage is legal.
2. **Vows** - promises which the bride and groom make committing themselves to one another.
3. **Rings** - exchanged.
4. **Official statement** for the bride and groom are now married.
5. **Prayers and blessings** for the couple and then for the whole congregation.
6. **Signing of the marriage register**, and receiving of the marriage certificate - a legal requirement.

1. The introduction

This explains the Christian teaching about marriage: a gift of God, blessed by Christ, and a symbol of Christ's relationship with the Church. Marriage should not be approached rashly, without thought, or to satisfy lust, but with respect, consideration and seriousness.

"Marriage is given, that husband and wife may comfort and help each other, living faithfully together in need and in plenty, in sorrow and enjoy. It is given, that with delight and tenderness they may know each other in love, and, through the joy of their bodily union, may strengthen the union of their hearts and lives. It is given as the foundation of family life in which children may be born and nurtured in accordance with God's will, to his praise and glory.

Common Worship

He will ask if anyone knows of any lawful reason why the couple cannot be married.

'I know not of any lawful reasons why I [name] should not be joined with [name] in holy matrimony'

'Wilt thou have.....to be your lawful wedded husband / wife'

'I take [name] to be my lawful wedded husband/wife'

2. The Vows

I, ..., take you, ...,
to be my wife [or husband].
to have and to hold
from this day forward;
for better, for worse,
for richer, for poorer,
in sickness and in health,
to love and to cherish [and worship/obey],
till death us do part,
according to God's holy law;
and this is my solemn vow.

Church of England Marriage Service - The marriage Vows

3. The Rings symbolise

- the promises they have just made to one another
- marriage cannot be ended except by death
- that love, like God, is eternal - it has no beginning or end.

4. The statement "Those whom God has joined together, let no one divide."

5. Prayers, Blessings, Hymns and Bible Readings

These show this is a Christian marriage. They are not found in a civil wedding.

6. The signing of the register

The signing of the marriage register and receiving of the marriage certificate is a legal requirement, otherwise the marriage is not recognised in British law.

The Bible and Marriage:

Marriage is important in the Bible, and should be taken seriously.

1. God intended, right from the beginning, that men and women should join together for life as couples.

The bond between them produces children, and in this way God's Creation continues.

Genesis 1-3 : In the story of the Creation, God made Eve as a partner for Adam.

"So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh. Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and He brought her to the man.

The man said, 'This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called "woman", for she was taken out of a man.' For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh."

Genesis 2:21-24

2. Adultery is wrong.

"You shall not commit adultery." *Exodus 20: 14 - 10 Commandments*

Married couples must be faithful for life. Christians believe adultery leads to mistrust and shows disrespect for the holiness of marriage. It involves deceit, and breaks the marriage vows.

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart."

Jesus, Matthew 5:27-28

"Marriage is to be honoured by you, and husbands and wives must be faithful to each other. God will judge those of who are immoral and those who commit adultery." *Hebrews 13:4*

St Paul said, "God wants you to be wholly and completely free from sexual immorality. Each man should know how to live with his wife in a holy and honourable way....."

1 Thessalonians 4:3-6

3. Marriage is for sex. Husbands and wives should look after the sexual needs of the other.

St. Paul said, "a man should fulfil his duty as her husband and a woman should fulfil her duty as a wife, and each should satisfy the other's needs. A wife is not the master of her own body, that her husband is; in the same way a husband is not the master of his own body, but his wife is. Do not deny yourselves to each other....."

1 Corinthians 7:3-5

4. Jesus said that forgiveness is important in a marriage, too.

In one story, he surprised a crowd with his attitude towards a woman who has been caught committing adultery.

'If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.'

At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the old ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. Jesus straightened up and asked her,

'Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?'

'No one, Sir,' she said.

'Then neither do I condemn you,' Jesus declared. 'Go, and do not sin again.' *John 8: 3-11*

Although Christians believe adultery is a very serious sin, they are to show love, compassion and forgiveness, and to think about whether their own behaviour is perfect before they criticise other people.

FAMILY

The group one grows up in. Different types of family.....

- Nuclear Family - a husband a wife with children
- Extended family - Biologically related group (includes grandparents, aunts and uncles etc.)
- Compound family - people living in one house
- One parent family.

Christians believe the decision to marry and start a family is personal, and some people might choose to remain single to devote their lives to God instead. Some of the best known and most respected Christians have not married, e.g. Catholic priests, monks and nuns. Jesus never married. Some single Christians choose to do important work that does not fit with family life, e.g. helping victims of war in dangerous parts of the world.

Christians believe family life is important because:

- The family is the first place where children can find out about love, companionship and forgiveness.
- Families provide love, comfort, protection and support.
- Families educate children to become responsible adults and better parents. Family life is a very important part of creating a stable society.
- Families encourage each other to follow Christianity. If they go to church together, worship together at home, take part in festivals, etc., they are all less likely to stop bothering.
- Parents can set children a good example of how to live a Christian life, e.g. show love and forgiveness.
- Families can play an important role in the community, e.g. provide hospitality, support other families, care for the elderly, and adopt unwanted children.

Christian couples / families might try to:

- Keep the marriage vows and promises - to be faithful, love, honour and respect each other, "for better for worse, richer/poorer, sickness/health, till death us do part".....
- Raise children as Christians.
- Pray and worship together as a family / couple, and go to Church.
- Make sure their family relationships follow the teachings of the Bible.
- Vote for Parliament candidates who believe in the importance of the family.
- Join organisations in the church which support families and married couples, e.g. Wives Clubs, groups for young married couples, Mother's Union, etc...

Roman Catholic Church

"All members of the family, each according to his or her own gift, have the grace and responsibility of building day by day the community of persons making a family a school of deeper humanity. This happens when there is care and love for the children, the aged and the sick; where there is a sharing of goods, of joys and of sorrows" Pope John Paul II

Church of England

In 1995, the Church of England published a paper called *Something to Celebrate*. It investigates the tensions within modern relationships, "specifically those experienced by parents, women as mothers, men as fathers, childless couples, single people, cohabitees and gay and lesbian couples." It concluded that "it is the quality of relationship irrespective of the form of relationship which the Church should endorse if the Church is to continue to offer a place of acceptance for hurting people where they can find wholeness."

The report highlighted the role of the Church and individual Christians in providing "advice, counselling, homes, preparation for marriage, mediation in family conflict, parenting courses, youth clubs and above all, friendship."

The Bible and Family

The different roles of husbands and wives.

"For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church. Husband's ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself." *Ephesians, 5-22-24*

St Paul explains his view that a man should have be the leader in a marriage, and have authority over the woman, who should serve him. This does not mean he can bully her, or expect her to do all the work - he must respect her, and treat her with love just as Christ loves the church. She should do as he says, and see him as authority.

Other Christians believe that these views are too old-fashioned for the modern world.

The Bible was written long ago when society was very different. Men and women should have equal opportunities at home and at work; a couple should share care for the children and housework, and they should both be able to go out to work if they want. If there is a disagreement, it does not always have to be the man who has the final say. Many women no longer promise to obey their husbands as part of their marriage vows. They argue that the bible teaches that everyone is made **"in the image of God."** (*Genesis 1:27*)

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

St. Paul, Galatians 2:28

Paul says Christians should not look at differences between people, but should recognise they are all united. It suggests Christians should consider each other as equals, e.g. at home and work.

The roles of children and parents

Children should treat their parents with honour and respect. They should consider their parents' wishes and feelings, and be obedient:

"Honour your father and your mother" *Exodus 20:12 - 10 commandments*

"Listen to your Father who gave you life and do not despise your mother when she is old" *Proverbs 23:22*

Adults have responsibility towards elderly members of the family, and should make sure they receive the care they need:

"If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith is worse than an unbeliever." *St Paul, 1 Timothy 5:8*

Parents have responsibilities towards their children. They should teach them about their faith, and expect them to be well-behaved:

"Discipline your son, and he will give you peace; he will bring delight to your soul." *Proverbs 29:17*

But, parents should not be too hard on them...

"Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged." *Colossians 2:20-21*

According to the Bible, Christians should try to treat everyone, even strangers, as if they were family members. Everyone has equal value to God. Christians should show Christian agape love to everyone.

"Do not rebuke an older man harshly, but exhort him as if he were your father. Treat younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, with absolute purity." *1 Timothy 5:1-2*

"Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother." *Jesus, Mark's Gospel 3:35*

Christian marriage in practice

"If you become angry, do not let your anger lead you into sin, and do not stay angry all day."

St. Paul, Ephesians 4:26

Christians believe that marriage and family is part of God's plan about the way people should live, and that it is blessed by God. Therefore, they might work hard at marriage and family life.

The Mothers Union : A Christian organisation which works to support couples, families and parents

Anyone can join the MU, not just mothers. Mothers Union AIMS are:

- Support parents and families, and help and support anyone with family problems.
- Uphold Christ's teaching on marriage, and promote marriage and family life to all.
- Encourage parents to bring up children as Christians / members of the church family.
- Link families together from the community / town / country / world.
- Work for better conditions for families and the protection of children.

Members are encouraged to:

- Take a full part in the life and worship of the church.
- Meet and work with local agencies who share the same concerns about family life.

If a Christian is a member of the Mother's Union, he or she might:

- Run a crèche in the church so young families can come to services.
- Volunteer to help the families of people who are in prison.
- Collect donations of toiletries and baby goods for a local Women's Refuge.
- Baby-sit for single parents within the parish.



What happens when a marriage runs into trouble?

Not all Christians condemn divorce. Despite the fact that God intended marriage to be for life it is recognised that relationships do break down and that divorce might be the only option left for a couple. Christians are well aware that family life can be chaotic, troubled and strained. To propose unrealistic ideals can only make many Christians and others feel that they are inadequate, or that they have failed. They have not.

A Christian couple might seek counselling from their minister and / or go to CMAC or RELATE.

Christians would pray about the situation, hoping for a reconciliation, but waiting for God's will to be done.

The teachings of the marriage ceremony can help a couple if their marriage is in trouble. They can remember the vows they made, to "love and honour" no matter what - "sickness / health, better / worse, richer / poorer till death us do part".. The rings are a constant reminder of those vows. They will remember that the marriage was made in the sight of God, and that God is the third person in a Christian marriage. They might remember Jesus' and the Bible's teachings.

The Church and Christian friends will be there to support the couple, e.g. by baby-sitting, counselling, encouraging, praying together, etc.. They will not just help them to separate because with support the marriage might work. There are Christian support groups, family and parent training courses, books, packs and videos!

Some Christians might put their beliefs about the importance of marriage into action by supporting an organisation such as Relate or CMAC.

Relate

Relate is not a Christian organisation, but Christians often support it. Relate provides education and counselling for people in relationships. Relate lets people talk about their problems. Counsellors are volunteers trained to listen, ask questions, and help people recognise and deal with their difficulties. They do not give advice, but guide people to think about their attitudes towards each other, and ways in which they could change their behaviour to improve their relationship. Relate Counsellors do not try to keep marriages together no matter what! Sometimes they help couples to separate less painfully.

Relate is not a Christian organisation. It helps anyone. Volunteers can be religious or not. Christians might support Relate, because it is a good way of putting into action the Christian belief that everyone is valuable and that love should be encouraged. Relate can help people to continue with their marriages and communicate better with each. A Christian might feel this is important because it helps to preserve God's gift of marriage.

Marriage Care

Formally known as the Catholic Marriage Advisory Council, Marriage Care offers help to anyone, but from a Roman Catholic viewpoint. Volunteers are usually Catholic. It bases its understanding of marriage on Catholic principles. It offers guidance for couples planning to get married, gives help in understanding natural methods of family planning, and helps / support people having relationship difficulties.



- "Marriage Care embraces and holds true to the Church's vision of marriage as a vocation of love, with the power to transform individual lives and to serve as a bedrock to a stable society."
- "Marriage Care supports people in the best and worst of times in their marriages and family relationships."

Roman Catholics might support Marriage Care because it follows the Catholic belief that marriage is a lifelong commitment. Volunteers are trained in the RC teaching about marriage, sex, contraception, annulment and divorce.

THE "Family of the Church" Christians believe they belong to the "Family of the Church", which will offer them support and comfort, and share in their times of joy. Some Christians refer to other Christians as brothers and sisters, and God is seen as "Our Father."

DIVORCE

Although marriage is valued very highly by Christians, not all marriages are happy. Misunderstandings are normal. In a successful marriage these are usually resolved, However, sometimes the husband and wife realise they are making each other so unhappy that they decide to separate.

Marriages can run into difficulty for many reasons:

- Affairs. The other person finds out and is so hurt they feel the trust in the marriage is lost forever.
- Money - too little, or too much...?
- False expectations about marriage - find it hard to cope if everything is not perfect.
- Work and stress: many partners bring work home (UK - longest working hours in Europe!).
- Children. Husband and wife have less time together; parents disagree about how to raise children.
- People change as they get older; they might not have much in common anymore.

Divorce and the Law

- In 1971 the Divorce Reform Act allowed a couple to divorce on the grounds of adultery, cruelty, desertion for at least 2 years, mutual consent (after 2 years), or if one person only wants a divorce after 5 years.
- The 1984 Matrimonial and Family Proceedings Act allowed divorce after one year of marriage.
- In 1995 Lord Mackay introduced a white paper removing the need for "fault" in a marriage, but compelling couples to spend a year in meditation and encouraging them to negotiate either a reconciliation or a mutually agreeable separation.
- The Family Law Act 1996 allows divorce if the marriage has "irretrievably broken down", after a period of "reflection and consideration". This effectively removes any minimum time limit.

The changes in law have made divorce easier. The divorce rate over the last 20 yrs has increased to one in three marriages. Some people blame the new laws, saying divorce is too easy and couples need to try and sort out their problems rather than giving up. Others say the law simply reflects changes in society, and that couples should be allowed to decide for themselves whether to stay married.

The Bible and Divorce

"I hate divorce, says the Lord." *Malachi 2:15*

In the Old Testament, divorce is allowed. If a man wanted a divorce, then he had to give the woman notice in writing. Nothing is said about women divorcing their husbands!

"If a man marries a woman who becomes displeasing to him....., he writes out a certificate of divorce, gives it to her and sends her from his house....." *Deuteronomy 24:1*

Jesus' teaching about divorce

However, Jesus' teaching was different. In this quote, Jesus seems very clear -

1. Marriage is for life. 2. Divorce is not allowed.

Jesus replied, "At the beginning of creation God "made them male and female". For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate. Anyone who divorces his wife and a marries another woman commits adultery against her. And if she divorces her husband and marries another man she commits adultery." *Jesus in Mark 10:2-12*

Jesus also said (words that are quoted in the Marriage Service):

"Man must not separate what God has joined together" *Matthew 19:6 and Mark 10:9*

But in Matthew's Gospel, Jesus gives a slightly different view: a man can divorce his wife for unfaithfulness; so divorce is sometimes acceptable.

Anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, causes her to become an adulteress, and anyone who marries the divorced woman commits adultery."

Jesus in Matthew 5:31-32

However, there is another view. Jesus might have allowed separation (he would not have wanted people to be unhappy!), but did not agree with people re-marrying while their husband or wife was still alive. Historically, Jesus might have been trying to protect women, because if their husbands left them, they would have nothing.

"A married woman is bound....to her husband as long as he lives.... So then, if she lives with another man while her husband is alive, she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is legally a free woman and does not commit adultery if she marries another man."

St Paul, Romans 7:2-3

Although Jesus seems to be very firmly against remarriage, Christians believe that the Bible needs to be seen as a whole. Some Christians will refer to Jesus' teaching on forgiveness to show that a divorced couple should be allowed a second chance with someone else. The best example to use is the woman who committed adultery and was going to be stoned. Jesus didn't condone her actions, but he said:

"Let you who is without sin cast the first stone" *John 8:7*

The difficulty with this example is that the sin (adultery) was in the past and the woman had repented. In the passages above, Jesus treats remarriage as a form of adultery, which is forbidden by the Ten Commandments, so while he might allow divorce, Jesus seems to prohibit remarriage.

Church teaching about divorce and remarriage after divorce

Roman Catholic Church

1. Marriage is for life. A couple married in a RC Church have become "**one flesh**", and stay married in the eyes of God until one partner dies. Couples expected to keep vows "until death us do part."
2. Couples can separate if they are unhappy, but they are still married, and must not re-marry.
3. Civil divorce (divorce granted by the courts) is not recognised by the RC Church.
4. When one partner dies, the other is free to marry.
5. RC Church does allow annulment.

Annulment

RC Church says marriage can be annulled. This is not divorce. Annulment is when the RC Church agrees that the marriage was never a real marriage in the first place, e.g.

- the couple did not properly understand what they were doing, e.g. did not understand the language of the ceremony, or mentally unable to understand the vows
- one partner did not consent to the marriage, e.g. threats had been made!
- one partner has no intention of ever having children
- the marriage has not been consummated (the couple have not had sex together).

Annulment involves lots of serious questioning, and can take a long time. It is rarely allowed. If a marriage is annulled, the couple must also get a civil (legal) divorce.

RC Church and Re-Marriage

The RC Church only allow re-marriage in church if:

1. death has ended the previous marriage(s), or
2. an annulment has been granted for the first marriage.

If this is not the case, any second marriage is seen as adultery.

RC Church does not accept civil divorce, so Catholics who have remarried while their first husband or wife is still alive are discouraged from receiving the Eucharist.

Church of England and the Methodist Church:

1. Do not morally agree with, or encourage divorce, but accept that divorce sometimes happens.
2. Civil (legal) divorce is recognised as an end to a marriage. Both are free to marry again.
3. Re-marriage in church is often allowed, but is not automatic. The vicar or minister decides whether the couple takes Christian marriage seriously enough.
4. If a previous partner has died, a person is free to remarry in church without question.

"The Lichfield Report" : Marriage after Divorce

1979 Church of England report "Marriage and the Church's Task" summarised the arguments for and against remarriage of divorced people in church:

For Remarriage:

- Although marriage is for life, there is no denying the fact of marriage breakdown.
- All people should have the opportunity of a church wedding.
- Jesus taught forgiveness. Not to allow remarriage in church is not in keeping with this.
- Jesus taught the most important quality was love. Not allowing people to re-marry is denying them the chance to feel love and raise a loving family. Re-marriage means new families, which must be good.
- The Church should encourage as many people as possible to marry, not put them off!

Against Remarriage:

- Church should uphold Christ's teaching on marriage, so should not allow remarriage after divorce.
- Divorce breaks eternal marriage vows / promises , e.g. "Till death us do part."
- Divorce makes a mockery of Jesus' teaching and the wedding vows.

WHAT ROLE DOES THE CHURCH PLAY IN LIFE AND WORSHIP?

The Church tries to support all people - families, individuals and the whole Christian family.

Worship is "paying honour to God, especially in religious services." Christian worship is centred around beliefs about Jesus. Christians regularly gather together with others for worship. Most take place on Sunday and most take place in a church. Christians will sometimes worship privately, with others, or with families. By taking communion each week, Christians show their commitment to living out God's ideal for humans.

Worship helps Christians to.....

1. Express their faith.
2. Strengthen them in their daily lives.
3. Provide responses such as praise, joy, wonder.

WHAT ROLE DOES THE CHURCH PLAY IN THE LIFE OF THE FAMILY?

The emphasis Christianity gives to the family is reflected in the activities and organisation of the church.

1. The ceremonies of Baptism and Confirmation welcome the young person into the family of the church.
2. Marriage is seen as the basis for family life. This is marked by a special ceremony, marriage.
3. Children are seen as a gift from God.
4. Worship involves the family in many ways; Sunday service in many churches is called the family service.
5. The Church is a community where everyone is committed to building and maintaining loving relationships.
6. The church tries to offer a role model for the rest of society, and actively supports Christian families.
7. Funerals - the church helps families and society come to terms with the death of a loved one.

CHURCH WORSHIP AND THE FAMILY - an example

"A day in the life of a typical Church of England Church"

- | | |
|-----------|--|
| 8.00a.m. | Holy Communion 1662 service - quiet, traditional, popular with the elderly |
| 10.00a.m. | morning worship - family service, modern, singing, dancing, drama, OR
morning worship - communion, modern, for adults; separate Sunday school for children; crèche |
| 6.30p.m. | evening worship - might alternate between the 1662 ancient service, and a modern service/youth event |
| 8.00p.m. | youth meeting 14 + group; inform worship and some social activities |

CHURCH ACTIVITIES - not specifically related to worship

Young wives, mother and toddler groups, mother's union, luncheon club, Sunday school, crusaders etc., house groups - adult discussions, socials, Bible study, prayer, courses, retreats, events.

The Church supports families / parents, visits from priests / vicars, advice, practical help for parents who are struggling (money, clothes, etc.), family guidance and counselling, weddings, funerals. At baptism, godparents are appointed to help raise the child and support the parents.

BIRTH AND DEATH

Until about 200 years ago, medicine did not present many moral problems. Couples who could not have children never became parents. Others often had 10+ children as there was no proper contraception. Serious diseases, illnesses or accidents often led to death. People could die peacefully or in pain. There was not very much anyone could do about life and death. Life and death were left in God's hands, because there was no other choice.

Medicine has made huge progress since Bible times. People can control the number of children they have by using contraception. Couples unable to conceive can have medical help. Pregnancy can be ended safely by abortion. Serious illnesses can often be cured. Illness can be slowed so that sufferers live for much longer. People can be kept alive artificially on life-support systems. Drugs can ensure that most people die painlessly.

All of these advances may raise moral issues, for Christians and others. Should we now make our own decisions about life and death, or let God decide "the time to be born and the time to die"?

"Playing God"

Some believe that when doctors make life and death decisions, they are "playing God". Should they step back and "let God decide?" But if we do this many would die even though doctors could help them. When should we help life? When should we end life? When should we leave it alone?

Christians believe it is important for people to use medical knowledge, and not just let nature take its course every time someone is ill. In the Gospels, Jesus healed people, not just let them suffer.

"While Jesus was in one of the towns, a man came along who was covered with leprosy. When he saw Jesus, he fell with his face to the ground and begged him, 'Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean.' Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. 'I am willing,' he said. 'Be clean!' And immediately the leprosy left him."

Christians see medicine as something positive, and healing is believed to come from God. However, Christians also believe that some aspects of medicine raise moral problems. Christians do not always agree about the right answers to these problems.

Christians and Ethics

See notes on "Sanctity of Life". The Sanctity of Life affects the way Christians approach medical issues, e.g. contraception, abortion and euthanasia. However, not all Christians agree on these issues.

Some Christians base their ethical decisions on rules that are either written in the Bible or part of the way God designed us (Natural Law). According to Natural Law it is wrong to kill - a **moral absolute** (a principle that applies in all circumstances), which explains the Catholic Church's rejection of Abortion and Euthanasia.

Other Christians are more interested in the consequences of their actions. They follow Jesus' example in trying to act in the most **loving** way in any situation (a theory called Situation Ethics). This explains why many churches accept abortion in the case of rape - even though abortion is an 'evil' act, it may be the lesser of two evils when you look at the consequences of not having an abortion.

THE SANCTITY OF LIFE

There are few people, religious or not, who do not value the gift of life. People value life even though at times it seems very difficult. Sometimes people may curse at life, especially when they are ill or have disabilities. However, the belief in the importance of preserving life is worldwide

Christians believe in the "sanctity of life": There is something special and holy about life. For Christians, human life is different because we share something of the nature of God. Genesis describes how God made Adam, and "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life." (*Genesis 2:7*).

This did not happen with the animals and the plants, but only with the humans.

Genesis also says that people are made "in the image of God":

"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." *Genesis 1:26-27*

This means people are in some way reflections of God. In humans, something of God himself can be seen. Christians believe that humans have a soul which lives on after the body has died. The soul will be judged by God, and can join God for ever in Heaven. Because people have souls, they must be treated as special; they are different from other species.

Some Bible passages teach that God plans each individual human life, and knows everyone completely. This quote says God has an intimate knowledge of each person, even before they are born:

"You created every part of me; you knit me together in my mother's womb. When my bones were being formed, carefully put together in my mother's womb, when I was growing there in secret, you knew that I was there - you saw me before I was born. The days allotted to me had all been recorded in your book, before any of them ever began." *Psalms 139:13-16*

- Christians believe that human life is sacred - it is more special than other kinds of life.
- Other animals do not have souls, and are not made in the image of God, although they deserve to be treated with kindness and respect.
- Christians believe that God knows and plans every human life.

Valuing human life

- God makes and loves each person, so everyone has value: new-born, elderly, healthy, ill, useful members of society or in need of care. So Christians should treat all human life with respect. Some Christians become doctors or nurses because of their Christian Faith: they want to put into practise their beliefs about the value of human life.
- Because God has given life, this means that Christians have a responsibility to take care of themselves. They should do something useful with their lives, not just waste it, and they should take care of their own health and other people's. Some Christians, therefore, will not smoke, overeat, drink or take drugs, because it shows ungratefulness for God's gift of life.

"Don't you know that you yourselves are God's Temple and that God's spirit lives in you?"

1 Corinthians 2:16

Jesus showed in his actions and teaching that all people should be valued.

"Love your neighbour as yourself." *Mark 12:31*

"A new commandment I give to you : love one another as I have loved you." *John 13:34*

Christians believe that when considering issues on life and death such as abortion, genetic engineering, embryo technology, contraception, euthanasia, suicide and life support, their belief in the sanctity of life should influence their decisions.

There are only two "fixed" points in our life. We can be sure that we have all been born and we can be sure that we are all going to die. Between these we have other 'life changing' points. For a non religious person these will be coming of age, marriage, having children, (divorce), getting old, death. For a religious person this is quite similar but these 'life changing' points all have ceremonies attached to them. These are:

- **Baptism** - being made a part of the Christian family.
- **Confirmation** - Taking on the responsibilities of being a Christian for yourself.
- **Marriage** - joining with another for the purposes of love, commitment and having children.
- **Death** - the end of the early life and the beginning of the heavenly or spiritual one.

Nearly all the **Christian denominations** agree that **Baptism** is important (the exceptions being the Salvation Army and the Quakers). It comes from the biblical stories of **Jesus** being baptised (**Matthew** 1:9-11, **Luke** 3:21-22, **Mark** 1:9-11). There is some disagreement among the churches about **WHEN** a person should be baptised. The **Roman Catholic**, **Anglican** and **Orthodox** churches all agree that babies can be baptised but the **Baptist**, **Pentecostal** and some **Methodist** churches argue that only adults should be baptised as you need to take a personal pledge of commitment at your baptism and this is only possible for an adult.

Infant Baptism

Each of the churches that have infant baptism have a different service (of course!). The **Anglican** (C of E) service is sometimes called a Christening. It usually takes place during the Sunday service as the child is becoming a member of the **church** family and so it is important that the family is present. **Godparents** are chosen by the family to help with the child's spiritual and religious upbringing.

At the service the parents and godparents all gather around the font with the vicar. Usually the mother or father hold the baby. The water in the font is blessed by the **vicar**. The vicar prays for the child giving thanks for this new life. He reminds the **parents** and the **godparents** of their own faith and beliefs. The parents are asked to name the child. He repeats the name. He lifts the baby over the font and pours a little **water** over the baby's head saying "I baptise you in the name of the **Father** and of the **Son** and of the **Holy Spirit**".

The vicar then takes some **holy oil** and makes the sign of the cross on the child's forehead saying "I sign you with the **cross** the sign of **Christ**". The parents and the Godparents are given a **candle** to hold and they are asked to confirm their belief in God and their commitment as Christians. They promise to bring the child up in the Christian faith.

The service in the **Roman Catholic** church is similar to the Anglican service.

In the **Orthodox** Church the baby can be baptised anytime between infancy and adulthood. It would be highly unusual for a baby to be baptised when it was very young, unless it was mortally sick. It is more common for a baby to be baptised after the fortieth day (when its mother has been churching and can attend the ceremony). Many babies in Greece are not baptised until they are toddlers (more for sociological than religious reasons).

At eight days old a separate ceremony takes place. At this ceremony the child is given a name (it correlates to the circumcision of Jesus). This service could be viewed as something parallel to a Methodist 'dedication' service. Baptism is not seen as a naming ceremony, it is the entrance of the child into the family of the Church.

Some churches (Methodist) have a simple **Dedication** service which celebrates the birth of the baby and the infant is given a Christian name but not baptised. The parents promised to bring the child up in the Christian faith. Later on when they are old enough to make a commitment for themselves the child may be baptised.

Believer's Baptism / Adult Baptism

Some churches (**Baptist/Adventists**) they believe that you should wait to be Baptised until you are old enough to make a choice for yourself. This is an important step for the believer as it shows that they are ready to make a **strong personal commitment** to their faith (cf confirmation). Believer's baptism is nearly always a **full immersion**, often in a lake or river - like the baptism of Jesus in the river Jordan. The baptism is usually held as part of the Sunday service again to welcome the person into the Christian family. The person being baptised will often dress in **white** and will talk about how they came to be a Christian and what being a Christian means to them.

What does Baptism mean ?

- **Death to the old life:** Water suggests the washing away of sin. Going down into the water expresses dying to the old sinful way of living. Coming up out of the water suggests a new life with new ways.
- **The gift of the Holy Spirit** (cf *Acts* 2:1-13): Through his Spirit God comes to live with his people, after his "death". A Christian is a new person.
- **Entry into the church:** Because they belong to Jesus. A Christian is a member of the Church (the body of Christ). A Christian is part of the wider family of the whole Christian church.
- **A new covenant (agreement) with God:** In the old covenant the sign of the covenant was circumcision. In Baptism God makes a sign of the new covenant.

Some symbols of Baptism

- **Water** - symbolises the washing away or "drowning" to the old life
- **Oil** - symbolises the church, a cross is made in oil on the baptisee's forehead
- **Light** - A lighted candle is given to the baptisee to symbolise the light of Christ (good) against the darkness (evil) of the world

The Baptism service - important points

The **parents** and **godparents** (or the person being baptised) have to make three declarations:

- That they turn to Christ
- That they repent of their sins
- That they renounce evil

They must answer each of these "I turn to Christ / repent of my sins / renounce evil"

They are then asked three questions:

- Do you believe and trust in God the Father who made Heaven and Earth ?
- Do you believe and trust in his Son Jesus Christ who redeemed mankind ?
- Do you believe and trust in his Holy Spirit who gives life to the people of God ?

They must answer each of these "I believe and trust in Him"

The baby has water poured over his / her head - this is the moment of Baptism and the priest / minister says "I baptise you in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit"

The person being baptised, or if it is a baby the parents and godparents are given a lighted candle to represent Jesus as the light of the world. The priest or minister says "Shine as a light in the world to fight against sin and the devil"

When a baby is baptised it is a member of the church but in the Roman Catholic and Anglican traditions cannot receive communion until after its **confirmation**.

What if you're not baptised ?

There are confusions and disagreements about what happens if a person dies without being baptised. Some people say that the person still has all their sins and so they go to "**hell**". Others say that they will be judged by God.

Historically some people waited until the last possible moment before being Baptised so that all their sins would be washed away and they would gain automatic entry in "**heaven**". Most churches now teach that baptism is important as an entry rite into the church family but that God will judge on the state of a person's soul.

CONTRACEPTION

In the past, couples had little control over how many children were born, or when. Little could be done if the mother's health or family finances were affected. Today, contraception means people can decide how many children they want, and when. Contraception can cause disagreement amongst Christians.

The Roman Catholic Church

- **"Artificial" contraception is wrong** - pill, condoms, IUD (coil), diaphragm (cap) etc. Catholics cannot use birth control that relies on more than the female body's natural menstrual cycle.
- **Natural contraception is OK**, e.g. sex when the woman is at her least fertile in a month. Natural methods of contraception always allow the chance of conception, if this is what God plans.

RC Church believes God designed sex for a purpose: for married men and women, and for reproduction. Roman Catholics believe this is a "natural law". Sex is spoiled if it is not an expression of love between married people, or if there is no chance of children being conceived.

RC Church is strongly against "contraception" which kills a fertilised egg, e.g. morning-after pill, because this destroys a human life and is the same as abortion (which they see as murder).

In 1968, Pope John Paul VI issued *Humanae Vitae* - "On Human Life". He felt Catholics needed guidance on contraception. *Humanae Vitae* stressed the importance of traditional teaching about limiting family size using only natural methods.

"Every marriage act (sex) must remain open to the transmission of life"

"Man growing used to the employment of contraceptive practices may finally lose respect for the woman and.....come to the point of considering her as a mere instrument of selfish enjoyment, and no longer as his respected and beloved companion." - using contraception may make people more promiscuous, preferring sex to love, seeing others as sex objects and not for who they are.

Although the RC Church teaches against artificial contraception, many Roman Catholics do not follow this. Many use contraception because they think it is unrealistic not to. RC Church has been criticised by 3rd World Aid organisations who say that contraception has to be available to control the population explosion.

Protestant churches:

Other Churches disagree with the RC Church. It is the couple's responsibility to decide whether to have children, how many, and when. They teach contraception is sensible and should be encouraged, because children are more likely to be loved and cared for if their parents want them and can afford to bring them up well.

Church of England

"This planning of the family should be agreed by husband and wife, and should be the result of a positive choice before God."

Free churches

"Contraception can be intelligent control over the number of children born, so that they are bringing his within the strength of the mother and the finances of the father"

Congregational Church

".....it safeguards the well-being of family and society."

EMBRYOLOGY, FERTILITY TREATMENT AND THE “RIGHT TO HAVE A CHILD”

Fertility treatment is used when people can not conceive naturally, usually because of a medical problem e.g. a man is not producing enough sperm, or a woman is not ovulating. There are different forms, depending on the problem. Often, couples may have to try many fertility treatments for months or years in the hope of success. It doesn't always work. It can be very expensive. However, it can bring great pleasure if it is successful. Childless couples may face the following options:

- **IVF - In Vitro Fertilisation (in glass):** Egg and sperm are brought together in a test-tube. Embryo is put back inside the woman's body.
- **AI - Artificial Insemination:** Sperm is collected and placed in the woman's uterus artificially.
- **AIH - Artificial Insemination (Husband):** Artificial Insemination using the husband's healthy sperm.
- **AID - Artificial Insemination (Donor)** Artificial Insemination using an anonymous donor's sperm, e.g. if the husband's sperm are not healthy, or a woman has no partner.
- **Surrogacy** - If a woman cannot have children, her husband's sperm is used to impregnate another woman - a 3rd party. She gives birth and hands the baby back to the couple.

Different opinions:

Christian views FOR IVF and AI

- It brings happiness to people who otherwise would not be able to have children.
- If life comes from God, anything that creates new life must be good.
- It can create loving families.
- God told Adam and Eve to "be fruitful and increased in number". God wants us to have children.
- AGAPE: most loving action is to offer medical help and to use these God-given gifts of healing.
- Golden Rule - "Do to others as you would have them do to you." If you were desperate for a child, wouldn't you want someone to help you?

Christian views AGAINST IVF and AI:

IVF and AI and other forms of fertility treatment are wrong because:

- God chooses whether people have babies or not; if a couple is childless, it may be God's will.
- God may have chosen these people to devote their lives to other kinds of Christian work.
- It goes against "natural law" to create a child in any way other than through sex.

Other Christians say fertility treatment can often be good, but sometimes it could be wrong, e.g.

- Artificial Insemination - Husband's sperm is O.K.. A donor's sperm is NOT OK - it is like adultery, a 3rd party is involved. It could cause problems for the child in later life.
- It could allow old women or homosexual couples to have children. Many believe this is wrong and unnatural. It is unfair to bring a child into the world without thinking about the kind of life it will have in these circumstances.

Do you have the right to a child?

Some Christians argue life is a gift from God, not a privilege, a right or something we can demand. Others argue that infertility is a medical problem, and that if doctors can treat it, we have a right to expect treatment. Why should it be any different from any other medical problem?

EMBRYOLOGY

IVF can cause moral problems. When scientists create an embryo for IVF, etc., they often fertilise several eggs to increase the chances of success. This creates spare embryos. Sometimes they are thrown away, frozen, used for future pregnancies, or used for medical research to find ways of improving health and overcoming disability.

Infertility and the Law

The Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 1990

- Treatments must be closely supervised by an authority who can grant or refuse to give licences.
- Embryos can be frozen until wanted.
- Embryos can be experimented on up to 14 days after fertilisation.
- IVF and AI are allowed, including the donation of eggs and sperm.
- Sperm donors must remain anonymous, and their sperm can only be used on ten separate occasions
- Commercial surrogate motherhood is illegal.

This law was put into effect after a major inquiry and report by Lady Warnock. She took notice of religious teachings and opinions. Most Christians were pleased with the report, but the RC Church thought it went too far when it allowed research on embryos.

Many Christians are particularly concerned now as embryonic stem cells (created using embryos) are being used to develop treatments for many different conditions including Parkinsons, Alzheimers and to re-grow damaged tissue in the brain, spinal column, kidneys etc. At present, the law in Britain and America allows existing embryos to be experimented on (using spare embryos from IVF), but does not allow embryos to be created for experimentation.

Many Christians (especially Roman Catholics) believe embryos are human lives, so it is wrong to treat them like this. Others think embryos are not yet humans, just a cluster of cells, so it is not a problem. Some Christians see the embryo as value, but balance the value of the embryo against the possible benefits of research to 120 million people world-wide (this estimate from the BBC's *How to build a human*, 2002)

Roman Catholic Church

Recognises that childless couples can become very unhappy, but life begins at conception and all embryos are human beings. Embryology is always wrong.

- Experimenting on embryos is always wrong because it is human life.
- Embryos should not be treated as disposable.

"The human embryo has the right to proper respect. 'Test tube babies' are real babies not simple embryos to be manipulated, frozen or left to die.... Human beings are not be treated as a means to an end." *The Roman Catholic Truth Society - 1985*

IVF and AI - acceptable, only if..

- NO "spare embryos" are created.
- No 3rd parties are used.
- They do not replace sex within a marriage.
- AI - acceptable, only if the husband's sperm is used.
- AID - not acceptable. AI using a donor is wrong! It brings a 3rd party (another man) into the marriage.

In an address to Catholic doctors, Pope Pius XII condemned AID because a third person becoming involved in a marriage is like "mechanical adultery": the donor fathers a child (with his sperm) yet he has no responsibility to the child; and a process that isolates the sacred act of creating life from the marriage union is a violation of the marriage union (which alone is the way to create life). However, if the marriage act is preserved, then various clinical techniques designed to help create new life are not to be condemned." *Adapted from Modern Catholic Dictionary*

"Any use whatsoever of any method that stops the natural power of sex to generate life is forbidden." *Pope Pius XI, 1930*

RC 1987 Report: "Respect for Human Life and the Dignity of Procreation":

This report gives guidelines for infertility treatment. Main points:

- Loving sexual relationships between husband and wife is the proper place for conceiving children.
- Children are a gift and a blessing from God.
- Although science makes some things possible, it does not make them right. Research must continue into the causes of infertility, but the morality of these should be carefully considered.
- All humans have the right to life from of conception. Infertility treatments must respect that.

Methodist Church

Believes it is right for scientists to try to learn more about causes and cures of infertility.

- Accepts using "spare" embryos in medical research, but only up to 14 days after fertilisation.

Church of England : 1984 Report "Human Fertilisation and Embryology"

- IVF is acceptable in all its forms, including the donation of eggs and sperm by third parties.
- Experimenting on "spare" human embryos is acceptable up to 14 days after fertilisation, because up to 14 days a foetus can split into 2 and form twins. Therefore, it is not really a human life until 14 days.

"We support the recommendation that research, under license, be permitted on embryos up to 14 days old and agree that embryos should not be created just for scientific research." *Anglican report - 1994*

Surrogacy : All Churches agree that surrogacy is wrong because:

- It involves a 3rd party in a much bigger way than donated eggs and sperm.
- It strikes at the heart of the family.
- It can create massive problems for everyone concerned, including the child.

ABORTION

"The premature expulsion of the foetus from the womb" before pregnancy reaches full term (40 wks).

Two forms

Miscarriage or spontaneous abortion: this happens naturally. Up to 50% of conceptions end this way, usually in the first few months, often without the mother knowing she was pregnant.

Procured abortion: deliberately ending the pregnancy; an operation to remove the foetus from the womb.

Abortion and the Law

Before 1967, abortion was illegal in the UK. However, backstreet abortions were done, often ending in permanent injury or death. The 1967 Abortion Act was introduced to provide a safe alternative to backstreet abortions. It was amended in 1990.

The law only allows abortion if.....

- 2 registered doctors examine the woman and agree to the abortion.
- Her mental or physical health is at risk if she goes through with the pregnancy.
- Existing children may suffer if another baby arrives.

Although the law was intended to limit abortion to 'serious' cases, Britain has effectively got 'abortion on demand'. Doctors in abortion clinics will allow women to have an abortion under any circumstances if that is their choice, and the conditions above are vague enough to allow this to happen.

Abortions must be done before "viability", when a baby can live on it outside its mother's womb:

1967 - 28 weeks

1990 - changed to 24 weeks

Many people, including most Christians, believe that the date of 'viability' should be reduced to 20 weeks, as some babies have survived from this stage. In practice, very few doctors will perform an abortion after 20 weeks except under extreme circumstances.

Abortion is allowed up to birth if the baby is mentally or physically handicapped, or if the mother's life is at risk.

Most abortions are in the early stages of pregnancy before it is obvious she is pregnant. Also - safer. Christians differ in their attitude to the law. RC and others believe the law is wrong because all 'foetus' are human from conception. Other Christians feel the law is about right. Others think it should be reduced to a time when the baby definitely can not feel pain.

Reasons for having an abortion:

- Single mother, not in a serious relationship, may not want to bring up a baby on her own.
- Pregnancy happens at a bad time, e.g. young, student, career, too many children already, etc.
- Foetus is not developing normally, e.g. mentally or physically handicapped.
- Rape.
- The woman's health is at risk.
- She feels she cannot cope with having a baby.

The arguments for and against abortion

Pro-choice arguments (for abortion)

Some believe a woman should have the right to choose to have an abortion, whatever the reason. She should not have to persuade two doctors that she is making the right choice. Arguments include:

- It's the mother's body - she should decide what happens.
- Every baby has the right to proper care and love; if this is not possible, abortion should be OK.
- There are already too many unwanted babies in our over-populated world. Why add more?
- Surely the woman, and her family, have rights, not just the unborn baby?
- Raped women should not be made to have the baby as they did not choose to get pregnant and would be constantly reminded of their ordeal as the child grows up.
- If baby is severely handicapped, only mother can decide if she can look after the baby.
- In the case of under-age pregnancy, the girl may not have really understood what she was doing, and should not lose her education and career opportunities over one mistake.
- A family may be too poor to cope with a child, and if there are other children already, they may suffer.
- Life doesn't really start until birth, or at least until the foetus is viable
- Many pregnancies end through natural abortions (miscarriages) - abortion is natural and often women don't even know they were pregnant: it doesn't have to be a big deal
- A severely disabled baby may have a very poor quality of life that also brings trauma to the parents who have to watch it suffer. It may be kinder for that child not to be born.

Pro-life arguments (against abortion)

Many people see the foetus as a distinct human being with its own right. They believe abortion cannot be justified because it is killing an innocent human being. Arguments include:

- Every child is a precious and unique gift from God. We have no right to destroy this.
- Defenceless baby needs special protection since it cannot stand up for its own rights.
- The rights of the unborn child are equal to those of her mother.
- The embryo is human from conception with its own DNA. Left alone, it will develop into a person.
- Physically or mentally handicapped children can lead full and rewarding lives. Aborting people because of disability is like telling disabled people that they are worthless.
- Abortion is murder - the deliberate taking of a human life.
- Doctors and nurses promised to save life, not destroy it. Abortion breaks the Hippocratic Oath.
- The foetus can feel pain and has intelligence.
- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child says that children need protection both before and after birth.
- Unwanted babies could be adopted. Many childless couples are desperate to adopt.

Abortion and the sanctity of life

Abortion issue generally depends on whether you think a foetus is a human being or not. Some Christians believe a foetus is human from conception, with the same rights and value to God as a child who has already been born. Therefore, abortion is murder. Others believe the foetus is not yet a person, so its life is not sacred. It is a potential person, but not a person yet. Therefore, abortion might be justified.

The Bible and Abortion

The Bible says very little about abortion because it was not as common as today. Girls were often married very young and did not have careers. Abortion was not a safe medical procedure. There were no tests for any health problems for the mother or the foetus. The Bible does not use the word "abortion" or deal with the issues directly, but Christians use Bible passages both for and against abortion.

Bible quotes used to argue AGAINST abortion

"Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you, before you were born I set you apart" *Jeremiah 1:5*
God has a plan for every human being even before they are born. Also:

Before I was born, the LORD chose me and appointed me to be his servant. *Isaiah 49:1*

"You saw me before I was born" *Psalms 139:16*. **"God... chose me even before I was born"** *Galatians 1:15*
These help support the idea that life begins at conception or, at the very least, that the foetus is a person.

Once Christians establish that the foetus is a human being, the sanctity of life teachings all apply:

"In the image of God" - *Genesis 1:26*

"Do not kill" - *Exodus 20:13*

"You yourselves are God's temple" - *1 Corinthians 3:16*

Bible quotes used to argue FOR abortion

Surprisingly, the Old Testament supports the idea that a human life is not as valuable before birth.

God made Adam, and then "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life." *Genesis 2:7*

This suggests that we are not human until we breathe (i.e. we are born). However, more convincing arguments come from examples of how foetuses are treated in the Bible:

"If some men are fighting and hurt a pregnant woman so that she loses her child, but she is not injured in any other way, the one who hurt her is to be fined whatever amount the woman's husband demands and the court allows. But if the woman herself is injured, the punishment shall be life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth." *Exodus 21:22-25*

This suggests that causing the death of an unborn child is not as serious as killing someone who is already born. Also in *Genesis 38:24* Tamar is ordered to be burnt to death because she committed adultery and became pregnant. Although her life is spared, this has nothing to do with the twin foetuses she carried which seem to be given no value or consideration.

"If a man does not get his share of happiness.....then I say a baby born dead is better off. It does that baby no good to be born.....It never sees the light of day or knows what life is like, but at least it has found rest." *Ecclesiastes 6:3-5*

"But better off are those who have never been born, who have never seen the injustice that goes on in the world." *Ecclesiastes 4:3*

These can be used to show that abortion is better than being born into a life of suffering, e.g. unwanted babies.

Roman Catholic Church

"Life must be protected with the utmost care from the moment of conception; abortion and infanticide are the most abominable of crimes." *Second Vatican Council, Encyclical Gaudium et Spes*

Abortion is always wrong. Life begins at conception, therefore abortion is murder.

- Unborn child is a sacred human life; it deserves the same respect as any other human being.
- Rape: RC Church does not support abortion - the foetus is paying for someone else's crime.

"Humanae Vitae", 1968: "Human life is sacred".

Pope John Paul II, 1985: "The unborn human being's right to live is one of the inalienable human rights"

"Declaration on Procured Abortion", 1974: Abortion is a serious sin. Everyone, whether Catholic or not, should have a proper respect for human life.

"From the time that the ovum is fertilised a new life is begun which is neither that of the father or the mother. It is the life of a new human being with its own growth. It would never become human if it were not human already" *Declaration on Procured Abortion (1974)*

The Church of England

Abortion is an evil to be avoided if possible, but can be justified in 3 circumstances:

- i) Risk to the mother's life or her mental and physical health.
- ii) Baby likely to be deformed and mother feels she can not cope.
- iii) Rape.

Although the foetus is to be specially respected and protected, nonetheless the life of the foetus is not absolutely sacrosanct if it endangers the life of the mother.

Church of England - Board of Social Responsibility Report 1984

CofE DOES NOT MORALLY AGREE with abortion, but often accepts it may be the only way forward for someone. They do not condemn someone who has an abortion, but would help a woman get through it, come to terms with it, and move forward. Women often feel they have done something very wrong, and need help. Sometimes abortion is the most loving thing to do. If Jesus forgives people, then so should Christians.

"We affirm that every human life, created in the divine image, is unique... We therefore believe that abortion is an evil... and that abortion on demand would be a very great evil. But we also believe that to withdraw compassion is evil, and in circumstances of extreme distress or need, a very great evil... In an imperfect world the 'right' choice is sometimes the lesser of two evils." *Church of England 1988*

"To regard the life of the mother as less valuable than that of the unborn child does not consider her 'right to life' in terms of her wider roles of wife or mother (actual or potential) of other children, as well in terms of her own person." *Abortion, an Ethical Discussion, Church information office 1965*

The Salvation Army

Life is sacred from the moment of conception, but accepts abortion if:

- Mother's life is in danger.
- Baby can not survive for more than a few days, e.g. severely deformed.

The United Reformed Church

Recognises a wide range of views among its members. There is a difference between a foetus almost ready to be born, and one in the early stages of pregnancy. Sometimes abortion is necessary, but should be taken seriously.

The Methodist Church

"Abortion... may be the lesser of two evils. Some embryos are grievously handicapped. If born alive, their only prospect is of immense suffering and usually early death. Where the pregnancy is the result of rape, the abortion may be necessary for the recovery of the victim... Termination of pregnancy may be the right course because of the social circumstances of the existing family, or the mental or physical health of the mother." *The Methodist Church, quoted in What the Churches Say CEM 1995*

Practical Christian responses to abortion

Christians AGAINST abortion might put their beliefs into action by

- In discussion, they may explain their opinions by referring to their faith.
- Join a pro-life organisation which campaigns against abortion, e.g. LIFE or SPUC.
- Vote, e.g. in America, where abortion is a big voting issue!
- Take part in protests, marches, demonstrations against abortion.
- Write letters to newspapers and MPs.
- Stand outside abortion clinics and try to persuade people to think again.
- Pray, asking God's help for the foetuses and the women.
- Campaign for proper sex education so fewer unwanted pregnancies happen in the first place.
- Organise talks for young people in the church
- Work as volunteers in a counselling centre offering help and contraceptive advice to young people.
- Offer practical help to women if they choose to keep the baby, e.g. money, baby clothes, etc..
- Baby sit for single parents, to take away some of the stress.
- Become foster parents, and look after children of parents who find it difficult to cope.
- Offer advice to someone considering an abortion, and propose alternatives e.g. adoption.
- There are various Christian adoption agencies.

Mother Teresa saw abortion as a terrible crime, and set up orphanages for babies who were unwanted and unloved. **'If you do make a mistake don't destroy the life ... because also to that child God says, "I have called you by your name, I have carved you in the palm of my hand: you are mine"'**

"You shall not kill by abortion the fruit of the womb." *Didache, early Christian document c100AD*

The Roman Catholic Church in Scotland project offers financial and practical help to women who choose not to have an abortion. Christians from all over the world send money and resources.

SPUC - the Society for the Protection of the Unborn Child

Not a Christian organisation, but Christians might support it because it campaigns against abortion (in all cases except when the mother's life is at risk), as well as euthanasia and embryo experimentation. SPUC argues that:

- Life begins at the moment of conception.
- Abortion denies a basic human right to life (the United Nations 1959 Declaration of the Rights of the Child said that the child "needs special safeguards and care, including appropriate legal protection, before as well as after birth."
- All human life is equally valuable (even if the foetus is not healthy).
- Aborting handicapped foetuses is discrimination against the disabled and the weak.

SPUC raises funds; produces advertisements and school educational materials; organises protests; campaigns to change the law; writes letters to MPs; tries to discourage women from choosing abortion.

Many Christians support SPUC because they believe life is sacred. Because of their faith, they might think it is not enough to express opinions about abortion without doing anything positive or practical. They might join an organisation like SPUC because it is a way of putting their faith into action. The Bible teaches about the importance of defending the weak:

"Rescue the weak and needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked." Psalm 82:4



Christians IN FAVOUR of a woman being able to choose to have an abortion might.....

- Join a pro-choice organisation.
- Support organisations which counsel people who have had abortions.
- In discussion, explain why they feel abortion is sometimes the most loving choice.
- Pray about the problem of abortion.

The All-Party Parliamentary Pro-Choice Group

Closely linked with the Pro-Choice Alliance, it campaigns for a woman's right to have an abortion on demand up to the 14th week, and tries to change the law so abortions are easier to obtain. They believe women should not have to explain their reasons, arguing that it is an invasion of her privacy, and assumes she cannot make sensible decisions by herself. It is open to anyone.



Some Christians might support the PCA because:

- Many Bible passages teach that men and women have equal value.
- They want women to be able to make choices about their own lives.
- Christian Love and Forgiveness - it is more loving to allow an early abortion if a woman wants one, than to make her go through with an unwanted pregnancy, causing her suffering.



SUICIDE

Suicide - a person intentionally ends his or her own life. In the UK over 5000 people kill themselves each year. Suicide drastically affects families and friends left behind. Men are 3 times more likely to commit suicide. Suicide rate among young people is rising. People sometimes attempt suicide but hope they will be discovered before they die - this is called a "cry for help".

Main reasons for committing suicide:

1. Depression, schizophrenia or other mental illness.
2. Serious difficulties coping with life, e.g. drink, drugs, money - the person cannot see any other solution.
3. Bereavement: a loved one dies and someone feels they cannot carry on without them.
4. Bullying: someone feels so insecure and frightened they would rather be dead.
5. Old age: a person is unable to live independently and feels it would be better if death came more quickly.
6. Serious or incurable illness, or someone is in so much pain or is deteriorating quickly, they would rather die with dignity than let it drag on.
7. Pressure: they feel they are not living up to other people's expectations

Christian attitudes to suicide : In the past, the Church taught that suicide was a serious sin; suicides were not allowed a Christian funeral, or buried in holy ground. Survivors were severely punished. They believed it showed a deliberate rejection of God's gift of life.

Today, the Church has changed. Much more is known about depression, stress, grief and other causes of suicide. Instead of condemning victims, the Church tries to understand, and support the relatives. Most Christians believe it is wrong to commit suicide, but understand why people try it. The right response to suicide is to be loving and forgiving. People should be helped, not condemned.

Christian arguments against suicide:

1. God chooses when we are born and when we die, not us.
2. Pain, loneliness or depression might be for a reason: Christians believe that by suffering they become closer to God, and share in the suffering of Christ. They believe God sometimes allows suffering so we can learn. Suicide is a refusal to learn the things that God is trying to teach.
3. Suicide is selfish: it causes much pain to those left behind. They may blame themselves. It is harder to get over the death of a suicide, than someone killed in an accident.
4. "You shall not kill". Suicide is murder of yourself.
5. "Don't you know that you are the temple of God?" 1 Corinthians 3:16
Christians have a responsibility to look after and respect their bodies, because God lives in them.

A Christian responses to suicide: The Samaritans



Christians might support the Samaritans. Started by Christians but open to anyone. Provides confidential emotional support to anyone who needs it, in the hope of preventing suicide. Increases public awareness of suicide and depression, so that people will be more understanding and better able to help others.

Started: 1953 **By whom?** The Rev. Chad Varah, Church of England vicar. **Where?** London.

Why? He was the vicar at the funeral of a 14 year old girl who had committed suicide. She had her 1st period, but did not know what was happening. She thought she had a disease, but had no one to talk to. Chad Varah was upset, and felt there was a need for an organisation where people could talk about their problems in confidence.

When it is available? Any time, day or night, 365 days of the year.

How does it operate? A network of volunteers on the end of a telephone or e-mail.

What do the volunteers do? They do not give advice or tell the caller what to do. They listen and help the caller to work out their own solutions. Volunteers are from any background or religion, but can not express their own opinions or beliefs to a caller. They work voluntarily, and this saves £10,000,000 a year.

Where are they now? Branches all over the country, overseas, drop in centres for people who want to talk face-to-face, email service, telephone lines.

Why would a Christian support the Samaritans?

Not a Christian organisation now, but Christians might support the Samaritans because:

1. It is a good way of putting into practise their beliefs about the sanctity of life.
2. It is a good way of showing agape, unconditional love, to those who need it.

Some Christians become Samaritans volunteers as a way of putting their Christian beliefs into action, or might raise funds, donate money, etc.

EUTHANASIA

Euthanasia - "A good death" - from the Greek "eu" meaning good, and "thanatos" meaning death.

Euthanasia is related to suicide because people choose how and when a human life should end, either their own or someone else who is unable to make the choice.

Difference between euthanasia and suicide: Euthanasia involves more than 1 person. Someone else is needed to perform the killing, provide drugs, or withhold life-saving treatment because someone is unable to commit suicide on their own.

Voluntary Euthanasia: "Assisted suicide": Someone chooses to end their life but needs help to commit suicide.

Involuntary euthanasia - Other people decide it is best if someone's life ends, because s/he can not make that decision. E.g. they have been in a coma for a very long time.

Active euthanasia - Action is taken to bring a life to an end, e.g. a lethal dose of drugs is given.

Passive euthanasia - Decision is made to stop giving treatment, even though death will result. This happens often in hospitals. Many do not accept this as euthanasia, because all you're doing is letting nature take its course.

In 1992 Dr. Nigel Cox was found guilty of attempting to murder a terminally ill patient. Sentenced to 1 year's imprisonment, suspended for twelve months. His patient had been in hideous pain which did not respond to pain killing injections. Dr Cox and the patient's family were devastated by the sentence; they said his action was solely in the dying woman's interests. He was lucky not to be struck off the Register by the Medical Council.

Euthanasia and the Law

1961 Suicide Act: Suicide became legal in UK, but it is still an offence to "aid, abet, counsel or procure" such an act. Anyone who helps to end a life risks being charged with murder or manslaughter.

In some cases, passive euthanasia may be allowed, but permission must first be obtained from the courts. Tony Bland, a teenager injured in Hillsborough 1989, was left in a Persistent Vegetative State. As there was no hope of recovery, the courts gave permission for his life-support machine to be turned off.

However, Voluntary Euthanasia is not permitted in Britain. Diane Pretty, a 43 year old woman with motor neurone disease, asked for legal permission to have help in ending her life. The courts said no, and a moving documentary broadcast after her death showed her last months of agony.

In the Netherlands euthanasia is now legal, from 1.1.2002. For some time the courts in Holland have turned a blind eye to the practice of euthanasia and the law has been changed to acknowledge this – with the majority of the public in full support.

The Voluntary Euthanasia Society (EXIT) believes that faced with terminal illness, pain or a useless existence, for which there is no cure, everyone should be able to turn to ".....the mercy of a painless death." They hope that the law will change to allow doctors to end the lives of people who have made it clear, in writing, that this is what they want. As a safeguard, the patient should sign a request to make this possible at least 30 day in advance.

EXIT works to change the law so people can make "Advance Directives" – statements telling others of the patient's wishes, in case they reach a stage when they cannot speak for themselves but want to be allowed to die.

Quality of Life is a main issue. If someone is enjoying happy relationships, can communicate, and is not in unbearable pain, then most people would agree that euthanasia is wrong. But, if the patient cannot communicate or is suffering so much they cannot enjoy life, then some would argue that euthanasia might be the best option.

Arguments FOR Voluntary Euthanasia

1. Can quickly and humanely end a patient's suffering, allowing them to die with dignity.
2. Can help to shorten the grief and suffering of the patient's loved ones.
3. Everyone has the right to decide how they should die.
4. Most people would have their pets put down if they were suffering – this would be regarded as kindness. Why can't the same kindness be given to humans?

Arguments AGAINST voluntary euthanasia

1. Many pain killing drugs can now help a patient die with dignity.
2. A dying patient may not be able to make a rational decision.
3. A patient may have said they want euthanasia when they were nowhere near death; however, when faced with death they may change their mind but be incapable of telling anyone.
4. Many people recover after being "written off" by doctors.
5. Euthanasia makes life disposable – it could be the first step on a slippery slope.
6. Hippocratic Oath: doctors must try to preserve life. If euthanasia was legalised, the relationship of trust between doctors and patients can be destroyed.
7. If there were better facilities for caring for dying, there would be less need for euthanasia.
8. People might be pushed into saying they want euthanasia by relatives who do not want to look after them.

Euthanasia raises some awkward questions for Christians...

- Is euthanasia sinful, or merciful and loving?
- If God decides whether we live or die, are we "playing God" just as much by healing people as by quickening their deaths?

How might Christians respond to euthanasia?

Some Christians would support euthanasia.

- God is love. Christianity is love and compassion. Keeping someone in pain and suffering is not loving, it is evil. Euthanasia can be the most loving action, and the best way of putting agape love into practice.
- Humans were given dominion over all living things by God (*Genesis 1:28*), i.e. we can choose for ourselves.
- Jesus came so that people could have life **"in all its fullness"** *John 10:10*: this means quality of life. If someone has no quality of life, then euthanasia could be good.
- God gave humans free will. We should be allowed to use free will to decide when our lives end.
- **"Do to others as you would have them do to you"**. How would you want to be treated?
- **For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die.** *Ecclesiastes 3:1-4*

Other Christians are against euthanasia. They argue it is dangerous to make euthanasia legal.

1. **"Thou shall not kill"**. It is wrong to take away God's sacred gift of human life.
2. **"God made man in his own image"** *Genesis 1:27* - human life is a sacred gift from God.
3. **"God gives and God takes away"** *Job 1:21*, not us!
4. **"Don't you know that you are the temple of God?"** *1 Corinthians 3:16-17*
5. Jesus healed the sick and dying, he did not kill them. Christians have a duty to help others who are suffering, not kill them.
6. Humans have a responsibility to use God's gifts to the full, not end it! Suicide denies our responsibilities to our neighbours, society, family, etc..
7. Everyone is created by God and offered salvation through Christ - killing is always wrong.
8. Killing a life opposes God's love for that person.

Christian beliefs about life after death may affect the way Christians think about suicide and euthanasia. They believe that after death they shall be judged and then enter heaven or hell. Some Christians argue that God would be merciful and understanding with someone who has taken their life.

Others say that a person will have to account for their deeds at the judgment. People may think they are acting for the best, but are in fact doing something which God disapproves of.

Christians may find themselves in a difficult situation. They may be stuck between their Christian beliefs that euthanasia is wrong, and their love for someone dying painfully of a terminal illness.

The Roman Catholic Church

1. Totally against euthanasia. Any act which deliberately brings about death is the same as murder.
2. Does accept using pain killing drugs which are meant to relieve pain, but may shorten someone's life.
3. "Ordinary" treatments, e.g. feeding a patient must always continue, but "Extraordinary" treatments such as a complicated operation that is unlikely to succeed need not be given.

Euthanasia is always wrong, but it is also wrong to keep a patient alive at any cost. People should be allowed to die, but only when nature, or God, decides.

'Euthanasia is a grave violation of the law of God' *Pope John Paul II, 1995*

The Church of England has been involved in discussions about euthanasia for 30 years, and has reported:

- Sanctity of Life is very important, but doctors should not have to keep people alive for the sake of it, regardless of the quality of life.
- Making the old and the ill feel wanted and valuable is more important.
- Church should do all it can to make the elderly feel important members of society.

God himself has given to humankind the gift of life. As such, it is to be revered and cherished. Those who become vulnerable through illness or disability deserve special care and protection. We do not accept that the right to personal autonomy requires any change in the law in order to allow euthanasia.

Church of England 1999

Baptist Church is generally against euthanasia. All human life is sacred and worth preserving. Euthanasia is similar to abortion, and raises the same issues - whether people have the right to take away human life.

Baptists agree that when a person is brain dead and experts agree there is no chance of recovery, then it is acceptable to stop treatment and allow the patient to die naturally.

Baptists do not agree with actions that make death come more quickly, e.g. a lethal dose of drugs.

Methodist Church

"We need to provide better care for the dying rather than kill them off 'early.'" Methodist Conference 1974

"I sincerely believe that those who come after us will wonder why on earth we kept a human being alive against his will, when all the dignity, beauty and meaning of life had vanished; when any gain to anyone was clearly impossible and when we should have been punished by the state if we had kept an animal in similar conditions." *Dr. Leslie Weatherhead (leader of the Methodist church)*

Hospice Movement The strongest argument against euthanasia. Hospices help people to die with dignity.

The aim of the Hospice Movement

Care and support for patients, relatives and friends at the most difficult stage in their lives.

1. Relieve pain - whether caused by the illness or by the stress and fear it creates. Hospices specialise in pain control and lead the way in palliative medicine (pain control by drugs). They say all pain, no matter how severe, can be brought under control.
2. Enable patients, families and friends to face up to death by allowing them to talk a free and open way. This is one of the main facilities offered by Hospices.
3. Care for the emotional needs of relatives - before, during and after the patient's death. In most hospitals, the needs relatives are largely ignored. Hospices seeks to fulfil those needs.



How did the Hospice Movement begin?

Late 1900s: A group of Irish nuns, Sisters of Charity, set up a home in Dublin to care for the dying.

1900: 5 of the nuns travel to the East End of London and continue the work.

1967: Cecily Saunders, a nurse, helped to create St. Joseph's Hospice in London, 1 of the most famous.

Now: 100+ hospices in England. At any one time, they care for 2000+ patients.

Hospices are not just for Christians, and not everyone who works there is a Christian. They do not try to make anyone believe in God, but provide opportunities to talk to ministers / priests if the patient wants.

Hospices support relatives, even after the patient has died. Some Hospices are for children, with facilities for children and families, with play areas, gardens, and rooms for brothers and sisters to stay.

Macmillan Nurses – Special nurses who visit patients and their families in Hospices and at home. Trained to care for the terminally ill. The patient sees a familiar face rather than different nursing shift every day.

Christians may support the Hospice movement and Macmillan nurses by:

- Raising money, goods, or other necessary items.
- Volunteering to do work at the Hospice.
- Working in a charity shop which gives its proceeds to the Hospice.

Other Christians choose to spend their lives working in Hospices or train as Macmillan nurses.

LIFE AFTER DEATH

Christians believe humans are made up of 2 parts – the (physical) body and the (spiritual) soul.

Christians speak of the “four last things” – death, judgement, heaven and hell. They believe:

- The relationship they have formed with God in this life continues after death.
- Jesus was the first of a new creation, i.e. at his resurrection he was not merely resuscitated but changed, though still recognisably the same person.
- What happened to Jesus will happen to them.

Judgement

The Bible teaches that people will be judged on their behaviour in this life. The standard Christians are set is the life of Christ. For example, the parable of the sheep and the goats.

“Come, you that are blessed by my father! Come and possess the kingdom that has been prepared for you.....I was hungry and you fed me, thirsty and you gave me a drink, I was a stranger and you received me in your homes, naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me.”

Matthew 25

Judgement is a continuous process already taking place. The way Christians behave either increases or decreases the life of God within them, so they are either growing closer to God or further away.

Hell

Hell is being cut off from God. Christians believe that people put themselves there by turning their backs on God and ignoring the signposts to heaven. The imagery of everlasting flames is associated with Gehenna, the rubbish dump West of Jerusalem where fire was constantly burning. Because it was outside the holy city walls, it became an image for a place cut off from God. In Jewish imagery, the things associated with a rubbish dump – everlasting fire and worms – became associated with being cut off from God.

Heaven is being in the presence of God. Although the imagery used to describe Heaven is not very attractive to people now, it is imagery, not geography. It is trying to express the inexpressible.

Purgatory Some Christians, especially Roman Catholics, feel they will not be ready at death to join the whole company of Heaven. They believe they must be some intermediate stage to prepare people. Other Christians believe that as Jesus Christ has already redeemed them (i.e. paid the price to free a slave) through his own death – nothing further is necessary.

Eternal life To Christians, eternal life is not something which happens beyond death. Because of their faith that God became man in Jesus, Christians believe that God is already present in the world and that the relationship they have formed with God in this life continues beyond the grave. They believe that those who have put their trust in Jesus have eternal life here and now.

The Christian Funeral Service

Christians believe strongly in life after death. They are sure that life continues forever beyond the grave. Death is not the end. The New Testament teaches that Jesus rose from the dead and one day Christians will rise again to be with him for ever (resurrection). This belief is reflected in the funeral service. When a Christian dies, a funeral service takes place in church or a chapel at the crematorium.

Before Death, many Christians (especially RCs) prepare for death by administering the Sacrament of Extreme Unction (Last Rites). The dying person is visited by a priest. A confession may be heard. Prayers are said. Blessed oil is placed on the body in the sign of the cross. Communion is given (sometimes known as **viaticum**, a Latin word indicating that it is food for a journey, the journey into death).

Purpose: comfort the dying; the feeling of sins being forgiven.

Funeral Service: Burial and cremation are allowed. Prayers are said, and Bible readings include:

"We brought nothing into this world and we take nothing out." 1 Timothy 6:7.

"The Lord gives and the Lord takes away. Blessed be the name of the Lord." Job 1:21

"Blessed are those who mourn for they shall be comforted." Matthew 5:4

"The Lord is my shepherd" Psalm 23

The minister will also say:

"Jesus said, I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and whoever lives and believes in me shall never die."

The priest may dress in **white** to symbolise the resurrection. The body may have been sprinkled with **holy water**. The funeral service usually includes a **sermon** from the priest/vicar, who will talk about the person who has died. People often send **flowers** to a funeral as a tribute. They represent the new life and the beauty of the world which the dead person is about to enter. **Candles** are sometimes lit to remind people that Jesus was the *Light of the World* and that because of him, Christians can be saved from their sins and go to heaven.

Burial: The coffin is lowered into the ground / cremated. These words are said:

"We have entrusted our brother / sister to God's merciful keeping and we not commit his/her body to the ground (or to be cremated). Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust: in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord, who died, was buried and rose again for us. To Him be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

"Man born of woman has but a short time to live. Like a flower he blossoms then withers. Like a shadow he flees and never stays. In the midst of life we are in death.....deliver us from the bitter pains of death. You know the secrets of our hearts; in your mercy hear our prayer, forgive us our sins, and at our last hour let us not fall away from you."

Note: In the past many people did not approve of cremation because they felt that it would mean that the person could not be resurrected on the Day of Judgement. In the Apostle's Creed it says: **I believe in...the resurrection of the body...** However, St Paul said that 'on earth it is a physical body but in heaven it will be a spiritual body...' 1 Corinthians 15:43

Summary: Funeral services are designed to comfort those who mourn. Although it is a sad occasion, they hope the person who has died will be brought back to life at the resurrection and go to Heaven.

Points to consider

- Should the Christian funeral service be a happy or a sad occasion? Why?
- Is the funeral service intended for the dead, or for those who remain?
- How will Christian beliefs in life after death, shown through the funeral service, affect the way Christians live their lives and decide on moral issues?

PREJUDICE AND DISCRIMINATION: RACISM AND SEXISM

Prejudice = pre-judging, an attitude of mind, judging someone before we have enough evidence.

Discrimination = action, treating someone unfairly because of a prejudice - mostly negative.

Stereotyping = forming crude mental images of a group of people, e.g. all Jews have hooked noses.

Scapegoating = a word that comes from the bible - see Leviticus 16:7-22 - describing how groups in society (e.g. black people) are always blamed for society's problems like unemployment and crime

5 Levels of prejudice: *in the mind - talking out - discrimination - physical attacks - genocide*

RACISM

Racism "Power and Prejudice". Belief in the superiority of one race over another; discrimination against an individual or group of people, based on racial background, usually colour.

Main causes of racism

- Children get prejudice from their parents and peer groups. Racism is learned. We are not born with it.
- Ignorance and Fear: People fear things they do not know much about, e.g. coming into contact with people who have different customs, language or appearance, they might express their anxiety through racism.
- Bullying: People make themselves feel better by picking on a person or group they feel are weaker than them. Sometimes, we all want to feel we belong to an "in group" and "hate" those not in "our group".
- Poverty and unemployment: Racism can form in areas of poverty or unemployment. People look for someone to blame: "Pakistanis are buying our corner shops, foreigners scrounge our benefits!"

Racism and the Law

Race Relations Act 1976 - illegal to:

- Stir up racial hatred by using offensive language or threats (= fine or prison).
- Distribute literature which is likely to stir up racial hatred.
- Refuse someone a job because of colour/ ethnic origin, or refuse them promotion/training.
- Refuse to sell someone a house or change the price because of someone's skin colour/race
- Stop someone using hotels, swimming pools, pubs, cinemas, services, etc..

CRE = Commission for Racial Equality - set up to monitor and investigate complaints of racism. It also tries to take action against racist people or organisations.

Has the CRE worked? CRE deals with only a few dozen cases each year, but over 60% of black people are sure they had been denied a job because of the colour of their skin.

Why has the CRE not worked? Discrimination like this is difficult to prove. People are not willing to come forward because of fear, or don't think it will do any good.

Examples of racism from history

Slave Trade: 16th to the 19th centuries. Blacks were stolen from their homes and families, taken to the USA, Britain and Europe, sold to white families and used as slaves. Often overworked, beaten and killed.

Colonialism: Europeans, e.g. English, French, Germans and Dutch built empires by taking over countries far away. They imposed their own government on these people, took their wealth, made them adopt new customs, clothes, ways of life and religions. Many foreigners died because the Europeans took diseases with them - entire races were wiped out. This was built on the belief that foreign races were savages, not fully human. Europeans thought they were helping to make people civilised.

Colonialism contributed to problems in the Developing Countries. Their wealth has been taken; the world's trade in gold, oil, diamonds and other resources is still in the hands of white people even though these resources are found in black countries. We are rarely told that the cause of poverty can be traced back to white colonialism and exploitation of black people by whites, e.g. 3rd World Debt.

Racism today - minorities are often given poorer housing, inferior education, not given a job or promotion. Many cities have 'ghettoes' where the majority of residents are ethnic minorities with poor living conditions and high unemployment. Recently the police was found to be guilty of institutional racism. The Stephen Lawrence case saw five white youths get away with the murder of a black boy because of the way the police handled the case. Other countries have seen the worst sort of racial violence, with millions of people killed in genocide (an attempt to wipe out a whole race of people), particularly in Rwanda and Bosnia but also in other racially-motivated disputes around the world.

The Bible and Racism:

The bible is clear that it is wrong for a person to treat another race as inferior.

"So God made humankind in the image of God" *Genesis 1:27*

God made all people in his image, so no-one should be discriminated against.

"Do not mistreat foreigners living in your land. The foreigner must be treated as one of your own. Love him as you love yourself, because you were once foreigners in the land of Egypt."

Leviticus 19:33-34

"Do not take advantage of a hired man who is poor and needy, whether he is a brother Israelite or a foreigner living in one of your towns."

Deuteronomy 24:14-15

The Jews were God's chosen people, yet the Old Testament makes clear that they must not take advantage of foreigners. Christians today might be concerned about attitudes towards immigration and ethnic minorities.

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

St Paul in Galatians 3:28

St Paul tells the early churches that all prejudice is wrong because Christ has drawn all people together. The Church should see Christ in everyone, and concentrate on unity, not diversity.

The Parable of the Good Samaritan *Luke 10:25-37.*

The hero of the story was a Samaritan, a race hated by Jews. Jesus says that love (agape) should not be restricted to people who share your nationality, but should be shown to everyone.

"My brother, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, do not show favouritism.....if you keep the royal law, "Love your neighbour as yourself", you are doing right. But if you show favouritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers."

James 2:1-9

St James says that Christians must treat all people equally. To show favouritism to one group is wrong.

Jesus' example:

1. Jesus' behaviour: treated all people equally. He healed a Roman Centurion's servant, and Samaritan lepers.
2. Jesus' teaching: e.g. the Good Samaritan - **"Love your neighbour as yourself"**
3. Jesus' death: Christians believe Jesus died for everybody, not just a few.

If Jesus did not see any distinction between people, then neither should Christians.

"From one human being he created all the races on Earth and made them live throughout the whole Earth."

Acts 17:26

Christianity and racism

Christians believe that all people, black and white, are equal in the sight of God. Everyone is made by God, in the image of God, so must be treated equally.

However, the Church has not always put this into practice.....

1. Church of England - unwelcoming to non-whites. Lack of black vicars, bishops, etc.,
2. Black immigrants in the 1950's and 60's did not feel welcomed by 'white' Churches. Instead they set up their own churches, which have flourished.
3. Images of Jesus - often white.
4. Many slave owners in previous centuries were leading church members; they said black people were not fully human so Christian teaching about equality did not apply to them.
5. Dutch Reformed Church - openly racism. Supported apartheid in South Africa.

Church responses to racism

UK Churches were largely responsible for the Race Relations Act being brought in. Statements from all Christian denominations show they agreed there is no place for racism in Christianity. The belief that God created everyone in his own image opposes racism. Churches are trying to change their own behaviour, by welcoming people from different ethnic backgrounds, and allowing more to become ministers, etc..

The Church of England

1993: CofE debate "Rejoicing in Suffering" to talk about Africa and the Christians there. CofE agreed that Christians should acknowledge the contribution made by Africans to the Church, and try to learn from them. Missionary work was still important, but this role should change into one of partnership.

CofE has been honest in admitting its racism, and is working hard to remove it. E.G.

1. Committee for Minority Ethnic Anglican Concerns - tackles racism in the C of E.
2. 1985 Report "Faith in the City": CofE should "make space for" and include black Christians fully.
3. 1990 Report "Seeds of Hope": The **structure** of the CofE is racist, **NOT the people**, i.e. CofE has "institutional racism", and this must change.
4. Report "The Passing Winter": changes in the CofE have happened, but racism is still not gone.

Roman Catholic Church "The Church and Racism" : 1988 Report

1. Everyone is created in the image of God - salvation open to all.
2. Pointed out that RC Church has condemned racism in the past, e.g.
 - 1537 Pope Paul III said keeping a black as a slave = excommunication.
 - 1888 Pope Leo XIII outlawed the slave trade in his letter "In Plurimis".
 - RC Church fought against Nazis in WW2.
3. Pope John Paul II has condemned the fact that Christians contributed to the slave trade.
4. Apartheid in South Africa must be abolished.
5. Racism must be fought against, inside and outside Church. Catholic Schools must educate children.

We are created by God in his image. Christ's salvation is for all; we all have the same destiny. We have physical and mental differences, but discrimination is wrong and is alien to God's design. Catholics support anything which fights against racism. RC Church works for human rights, and has its own "Justice and Peace" groups.

United Reform Church (URC)

1. Creation: All humans **created** in the image of God (Genesis 1:26). "There is only one human race."
2. Redemption: **Jesus died to save all people**. Barriers between race, sex, etc., are over.

URC "Declaration on Racism", May 1987

"The URC believes that all people are created in God's image, free and equal in his sight."

World Council of Churches, 1980 :

"Every human being created in the image of God is a person for whom Christ died. Racism..... is an assault on Christ's values, and a rejection of his sacrifice."

The Quakers : Condemn racism. 18th Century, slave owners or slave traders not allowed to become Quakers.

Christian action against racism

Christians can help fight prejudice and discrimination by putting their beliefs into action, e.g.

- Avoid making judgements about people before they know them properly.
- Make sure equal opportunities policies at work are implemented.
- Make it clear to friends and colleagues that racist or sexist jokes are not funny.
- Raise children to share their beliefs that all humans are equally valuable.
- Pray about the problems caused by racism, sexism, etc..
- Join organisations which campaign for equality.
- Make members of ethnic minorities feel welcome, included and respected.
- Votes for MPs policies who are anti-racist and anti-sexist.
- Take part in peaceful demonstrations against racism, sexism, etc..

Martin Luther King (1929-1968)

Abraham Lincoln abolished slavery in 1869, but life for blacks in America was still difficult:

- Treated as inferior, second-class citizens. Not allowed to vote.
- Dreadful living conditions and exploited by white employers.
- Segregation: different schools, restaurants, seats on buses, swimming pools, etc..



MLK's father was a Christian minister in Georgia. At home and church MLK was taught that God created everyone in his own image. He heard stories about Jesus caring for all people. When he went out, however, he saw all blacks treated as inferior. MLK became a Baptist minister in Montgomery, Alabama.

1955: Mrs. Rosa Parks, old black woman, arrested for refusing to give up her seat to a white man. MLK decided to help blacks gain civil rights. He joined the American Civil Rights Movement, and became their leader in 1960.

What did he do?

1. Bus Boycott: blacks refused to use public buses until blacks and whites could sit side by side. 1956, a law was passed making a racial segregation on America's buses illegal.
2. Boycotts of Cafés, restaurants and schools.
3. "Freedom rides" across America.
4. Sit-ins in coffee-shops and at lunch counters
5. Marches and Demonstrations, non-violent. Black and white people marched together.
6. Speeches: August 1963, famous "I have a dream" speech to 250,000 in Washington.

How did he do it?

Non-violent protest (NVP, also NVDA - Non-Violent Direct Action). He said violence must not be used to gain equal rights. He carried on even though people bombed his house, and threatened to kill him, his wife and 4 children. He was attacked, and stabbed once.

Why did he use NVP?

1. Believed the teaching of the Bible and the Christian Faith that all people are born in the image of God, and loved by God equally. God sees no distinction between black and white.
2. Believed Jesus died for all people, not just whites.
3. Wanted to put agape love into action, but no-one has the right to fight, hurt or kill people to gain equal rights because God loves all people, including racists.
4. Believed you only change people through love, not hatred or violence. Hatred must be confronted by love.

Was he successful? Highly respected by President Kennedy, blacks allowed to vote, segregation became illegal. However, racist attitudes are still strong in USA, from both sides.

April 1968, aged 38, MLK was shot dead by a white man in a hotel in Memphis, Tennessee.

SEXISM

Sexism is treating people differently because of their gender.

"The souls of women are so small that some believe they have none at all." Samuel Butler (1612-1680)

"You start by sinking into his arms and end up with your arms in his sink" Graffiti

Examples of sexism

Men have normally held power. Most people live in societies controlled by male attitudes and values.

Work: When women were allowed to enter paid employment, many jobs were barred to them.

Today, women do most of the world's work, but get 10% of world income and own 2% of world property.

Sexist Language: Male terms: chairman, masterpiece, statesman, forefathers, God the Father.

Votes: 1918, women got the vote, but only women over 30 who had property, or been to university. 1928 - women were allowed to vote as equals with men.

Women have been stereotyped as suitable only as mothers, child-rearers and servants of men. In the past, women spent almost all their adult lives producing and looking after children. Education was limited. Very few jobs were available to them. They were expected to marry, give up jobs and look after husband / family. This changed after World War II; it was more acceptable for women to work.

Sexism and the Law

The Sex Discrimination Act 1975: Illegal for employers to discriminate against job applicants on the basis of gender. Men and women should have equal opportunities for training and promotion.

Exceptions: - Women should not work underground as miners.

Church did not have to have women priests.

Despite the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, all is not fair....

- If women take time out to have children, it can mean falling behind in promotion.
- Some firms are reluctant to train women for responsible posts in case they want more time off than men, e.g. have children, or look after sick children.
- Women earn on average 25% less than men for doing the same job.
- Women hold far fewer positions of power and influence.
- A small percentage of MPs are women.
- Women are the majority of churchgoers, but some Churches will not allow women leaders.

Some questions to think about.....

Can women expect the same careers as men, if pregnancy and childbirth take up so much time and energy?

On the other hand, shouldn't parenting be shared between men and women?

Shouldn't employers make the effort to support family life, e.g. by providing flexible working hours?

Different roles of men and women. Many Christians believe women should have the caring, nurturing role (i.e. home and family), and men have the work role. Others feel this is outdated and roles should be shared equally.

The Church and sexism

Like all institutions dominated by men, the Church has been guilty of sexism. Women have had little power in the Church, although most churchgoers are women. God is assumed to be a man. Women have only recently been allowed to become ministers / vicars in some Churches, but not R.C. or Orthodox.

POSSIBLE ORIGINS OF SEXISM IN THE CHURCH.....

The Bible reflects the social realities of Old Testament times and ancient Jewish society.

- a) Genesis 1-3: Eve is made from Adam's rib to be his helper - inferior? Eve gave into temptation first. As a punishment God says, **"Your husband will rule over you."**
- b) Bible Times - patriarchal (male-dominated). Men could divorce women, but not vice versa; rape/adultery - violation of man's ownership rights; women - "unclean" for much of adult life (menstruation); God is called "Father", "He", "Him", etc..
- c) Was Jesus sexist? Jesus had no female disciples; he called God "Father".
- d) Was St. Paul sexist?

"Women.....be subject to your husbands."

Ephesians 5:22-23

"A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I permit

no women to teach or have authority over men, she is to keep silent. " 1 Timothy 2:9-12

The Church seems to have supported sexism

For 2000 years, Church has reinforced society's view that a woman's place is in the home.

"Women should remain at home, sit still, keep house and bear children" Martin Luther (1483-1546)

RC Church does not allow abortion or contraception; family life is the most important thing for society. Does this deny women their rights?

"The language of the church is sexist too. Why is God always Male? Surely God, the creator of everything, is both male and female." Rev. Nan Peete

THE CHURCH SHOULD NOT BE SEXIST BECAUSE.....

Jesus' treatment of women was revolutionary - he did not share the common view of women. Jesus....

- Taught in the Jerusalem Temple "Court of the Women".
- Had women followers (Martha, Mary, Mary Magdalen), and preached to women (Luke 10:38-42).
- Treated outcast women with respect (e.g. Samaritan Woman, John 4:7-30), and talked openly with "unrespectable" women such as prostitutes.
- First revealed himself as Saviour to a Samaritan woman (John 4:7-30).
- After the resurrection Jesus appeared first to women (Matthew 28:1-10).
- Jesus showed "feminine" qualities - love, tenderness, gentleness, compassion. Cried openly in public.
- Luke's Gospel says Jesus took as much notice of women as he did of men.

The Bible and Sexism

1. In the Bible, God frees the oppressed and helps those struggling for liberation/freedom.
2. God created all people equal. God is even referred to in female terms at least three times.
3. There are women who had important roles in encouraging people to follow God: Queen Esther saved the Jews from death; Ruth set an example of love and loyalty; Deborah was a prophet, and her wisdom was much admired.

St. Paul

St. Paul seems to be contradictory. Above he says that women should be silent, etc., but he also had some radical messages that were revolutionary in the first century!

- Husbands must love their wives like Christ loves the church and, love them as they love their own bodies: **"He who loves his wife loves himself"** *Ephesians 5:28-29*

"There is neither male nor female for your one in Christ Jesus" *Galatians*

Feminist theology

"As women we want to be consulted about attitudes in the Church and not be expected just to make cups of tea!" Rev. Nan Peete

Since the 1960s, Feminist Theology has arisen in the Christian Church. Women are slowly beginning to make the Church think again about its male dominated language and sexist attitudes.

The ordination of women (women priests)

The church is deeply divided over whether women should be priests / vicars.

Churches which have women priests.....

United Reformed Church and the Salvation Army have always allowed women to be ministers.

The Baptist Church allows women to be ministers now since the 1920s.

The Church of England allowed women to become vicars in 1992. It caused widespread division with some male leaders, and other men and women, leaving the Church.

Arguments for the ordination of women

- Jesus came to break down barriers of sex, nationality, race, etc..
- Jesus' attitude towards women was revolutionary - see above.
- Men and women are made in the image of God.
- In the past, society did not allow women a leading role, but times have changed.
- Jesus chose men because women were not listened to publicly in his society. If Jesus came today, he would choose men and women without question.

Churches which do not allow women priests

The Roman Catholic Church and The Orthodox Church will not allow women priests.

Arguments against the ordination of women

- Jesus chose men to be his Apostles and the foundation of the Church, not women.
- Jesus' authority has been passed on through men - we should not ignore this powerful tradition.
- 2000 years of tradition cannot be wrong, surely?
- Ordaining women is a stumbling block against great unity between churches. The R.C. and Orthodox churches are totally opposed to women priests!
- When celebrating Eucharist, the priest represents Christ who was a man. Women cannot play this role.

Roles of men and women in the Church : Christians do not agree about the place of women in the Church.

Some believe men and women should be treated the same in every way, e.g. be leaders, preachers and priests, too. Christians should recognise that everyone is made in the image of God. At Pentecost the Holy spirit **WAS** given to men and women equally. Women should have important roles in the Church, not just arranging the flowers, organising the crèche or making tea! Christianity has been responsible for women being treated as inferior. The Bible, and the way it has been interpreted, has encouraged injustice. If a woman feels God is calling her to be a priest, who can argue?

Others believe that men and women are equally valuable to God, but have different roles and important differences, physical, psychological and emotional. They have different gifts which should be put to different uses. It is no good pretending that men and women are the same - they are not. Jesus did not choose men to be his Apostles by accident. Some roles in the church are more suitable for men. Who says raising a family is not important? It is the most important job in the world. We are equal, but different. Women should stop trying to be men.

WAR, PEACE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Just war: Although war is regarded as bad, if it is FOR Justice it could be considered less wrong. From early times Christians have tried to justify war and to make rules and conditions for it.

Holy war: Some religions have claimed that wars can be holy if they are fought in the name of God.

Pacifism: Refusal to use violence or to fight in wars.

Conscientious Objector: Person who refuses, on the basis of conscience, to fight in a war. COs can serve in non-combatant roles, e.g. stretcher-bearer. CO does not have to be a pacifist, he may just object to a particular war.

Prisoner of conscience: Someone imprisoned for what they believe or who they are, not for what they have done.

Fact file

- Total global military expenditure = approx. \$1.5 million a minute.
- WWI killed 9 million men, and seriously wounded over 21 million more.
- 50% of victims in WWII were civilians.
- 90% of victims in wars today are civilians.
- Between 200,000 and 400,000 women were raped in Bangladesh during a nine-month conflict in 1971.

Main causes of war Humans have a violent streak in their nature, probably because of fighting for survival for thousands of years. The main causes of war today are:

Politics / ideology	<i>e.g. Communism Vs Capitalism</i>
Religion	<i>e.g. Protestant Vs Catholic, Muslim Vs Jew</i>
Nationalism	<i>e.g. Getting rid of a foreign rule</i>
Race / ethnicity	<i>e.g. Serb Vs Croat</i>
Lust for power / money	<i>e.g. Seizing land of other nations, e.g. Hitler</i>
Revenge	<i>e.g. Being defeated in a previous war</i>
Economics	<i>e.g. Fighting to provide better resources for own people</i>
Injustice	<i>e.g. Fighting an oppressive situation or regime, fighting for justice</i>
Fear	<i>e.g. Defence against a threatening military enemy</i>
A powerful individual/group	<i>e.g. a dictator who tries to rule others by force</i>

Main effects of war

- Millions of deaths - more than 30,000 people die every month because of war.
- Many die because countries spend money on weapons, not clean water, food, health or education.
- Massive environmental damage.
- 90% of victims in war are innocent civilians -
- Massive refugee crisis (e.g. Afghanistan today), resulting in starvation, misery and death.

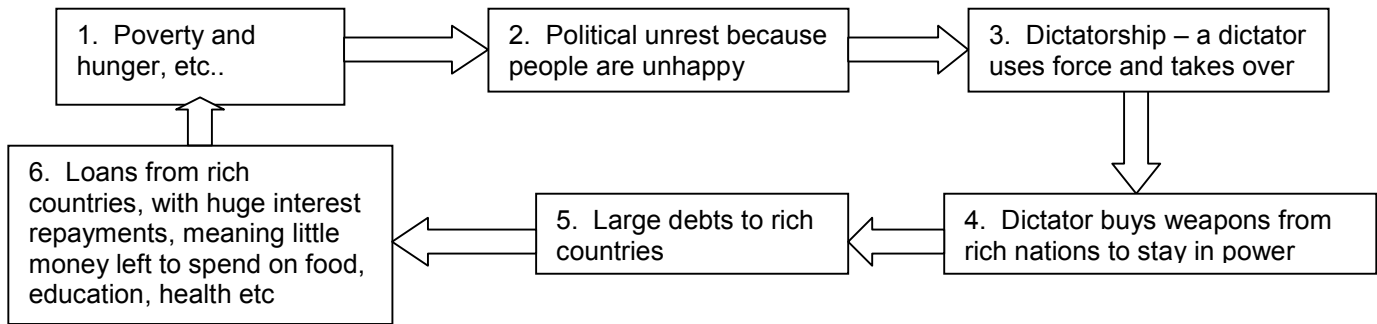
Key statistics - Over \$1,000 billion is spent on arms every year world wide.
 - Half of Britain's scientists and engineers work on military research.

But - Over 1 billion people do not have safe drinking water
 - 15 million children die each year from disease and starvation.

Military expenditure and under-development in poor countries : When countries spend money on weapons, they are not spending it on food, education, health, clean water, etc.. This is a concern for Christians.

Link between war, and poverty / hunger / disease

War is one of the main reasons for starvation, poverty, hunger and disease in underdeveloped countries. More than 60 countries in underdeveloped countries are ruled by military dictatorships. These nations often show a similar pattern, as shown in this illustration.



Christianity and Violence / War

Christians believe war is wrong and that God wants everyone to live in peace and justice. However, Christians have different views about how peace can be achieved. Some believe it is always wrong to use violence. Others argue that sometimes war is necessary to overcome evil.

The Bible, war and the use of violence

In the Bible, war and peace were dealt with in many different ways. The Bible was written over hundreds of years, for people in different situations. Sometimes they were at peace, sometimes at war; sometimes they won, sometimes they lost; sometimes they were taken into exile or had to live under the rule of a foreign power (e.g. the Romans). These varied situations are reflected in the Bible teaching about war and peace. Because there are different teachings, Christians have different views whether using war and violence can ever be right.

Bible teaching in support of war and the use of violence

In the Old Testament, people are sometimes commanded by God to go to war. In Deuteronomy, Joshua and Judges, God often tells his people to fight and destroy foreign tribes to gain the Promised Land (Israel).

"The lord your God will drive out those nations before you, little by little.....the Lord your God will deliver them over to you, throwing them into great confusion until they are destroyed.....no one will be able to stand up against you; you will destroy them."

Deuteronomy 7:22-24

The Old Testament Prophet, Joel, tells the people that God wants them to go and fight.

"Prepare for war! Rouse the warriors! Let all the fighting men drawn near and attack." *Joel 3:9-10*

"The Lord is a warrior." *Exodus 15:3*

"You shall not kill." *Exodus 20:13*. "Kill" refers only to unlawful killing, not other forms of killing, e.g. war.

**"There is a time for killing, and a time for healing,
a time for tearing down and a time for building up,.....
a time for tearing and a time for mending....."**

**a time for love and the time for hate,
a time for war, and a time for peace."**

Ecclesiastes 3:2-8

Christians use these quotes in a discussion about war and the use of violence to show that there are times when war is justified. God cannot be totally opposed to war in all circumstances.

The example of Jesus

1. Jesus used anger and violence once!

"Jesus entered the Temple Area and began driving out those who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money-changes and the benches of those selling doves."

To some Christians this means that it can sometimes be right to be violent when people are being cheated or treated unfairly.

"Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword."

Matthew 10v34

2. Jesus came into contact with soldiers, but never once told them they were wrong to fight.

Jesus healed a Roman centurion's servant (Luke 7:1-10). This story shows a well-respected soldier being praised by Jesus for his faith. Jesus never told him he was wrong to be a soldier.

Christians might use these examples in a discussion about war and the use of violence to support the view that sometimes war and violence is the best way of making sure that there is Peace and Justice.

Bible teaching in favour of pacifism - i.e. against war and the use of violence

The Old Testament is full of the message that God wants to see a world full of peace and justice. The Old Testament prophets often see the future Kingdom of God as a kingdom of peace.

Turn from evil and do good, seek peace and pursue it. *Psalm 34v14*

The Prophet Isaiah said that the Messiah would bring peace and justice to the world. Isaiah calls him "The Prince of Peace":

"And he will be called a Wonderful Counsellor, mighty God, everlasting father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end." *Isaiah 9:6-7*

The Prophet Micah looks forward to a time when God's rule is established. God's kingdom will be one of peace.

"They will beat their swords into plough shares, and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war any more." *Micah 4:3*

"You shall not murder." *Exodus 10:13*

Christians could use these verses to show that violence is never acceptable. Peace is a feature of the Kingdom of God, and God wants all people to live in peace and justice.

The teaching and example of Jesus

Jesus taught that the right response to aggression is love, not hate.

"Do not take revenge on someone who wrongs you. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also." *Matthew 5:39*

"Love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you." *Matthew 5:44*

"Blessed are the peacemakers" *Matthew 5:9*

"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give you." *John 14v27*

When Jesus was arrested, he would not let his disciples use violence to prevent his arrest....

"Then the men stepped forward, seized Jesus and arrested him. With that, one of Jesus' companions reached for his sword, drew it out and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear. 'Put your sword back in its place,' Jesus said to him, 'for all who live by the sword will die by the sword.' Enough of this, stop it!"

Luke 22:49-51

Christians who try to follow Jesus' example might say that because Jesus would not allow people to use violence to defend him, then violence is wrong, and that peaceful methods should be used.

Other New Testament writers followed Jesus' teaching

Saint Paul

"If someone has done you wrong, do not repay him with a wrong. Try to do what everyone considers to be good. Do everything possible on your part to live in peace with everybody. Never take revenge, instead let God's anger do it. If your enemies are hungry, feed them. Do not let evil defeat you; instead, conquer evil with good."

"Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts." *Colossians 3:15*

Do not overcome evil by evil, but overcome evil with good. *Romans 12v21*

Saint Peter

"Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing...." *1 Peter 3:9*

AGAPE should be shown unconditionally to everyone - family, friends, strangers or enemies. Jesus taught love, compassion, forgiveness and reconciliation. He said love and forgiveness was the way to overcome hatred. For many Christians, how can loving someone include killing them in the war?

The sanctity of life All people are made in the image of God, and loved by God (Genesis 1). This suggests that war is wrong, because it involves taking away a life that has been planned, made, and loved by God.

The attitudes of Christians to War

Christian attitudes to war on the use of violence have changed over time.

1. The very earliest Christians were pacifists.
2. When Christianity became the Roman Army's official religion, these Christians were expected to fight.
3. Later, the Church believed it was right to go to war to defend the innocent, or if the war was a "holy war", i.e. defending Christianity.
4. The Crusades: in the Middle Ages, Christians led "The Crusades". Jerusalem was under Muslim rule, so the Church fought to recapture Jerusalem and stop the Muslims from expanding their empire. They used war because they believed God was on their side and they were fighting evil.
5. Today, most Christians agree that violence and war is sometimes necessary to fight evil, and bring justice and peace to the world. Some Christians are Conscientious Objectors. A few are pacifists.

The Just War Theory

In the 4th Century, St. Augustine set out two conditions for a Just War (later added to by St. Thomas Aquinas and others) - ALL of these conditions should hold if a war is to be considered JUST.

1. **PROPER AUTHORITY** - war should be declared by a proper authority e.g. a government or king
2. **JUST** - the war must be started for a good reason - e.g. self-defense, and not because of greed, etc..
3. **ESTABLISH GOOD** - the war must be fought to establish good, or fight evil
4. **REASONABLE CHANCE OF SUCCESS** - it should be possible to win the war
5. **LAST RESORT** - it must be a last resort, when everything else has been tried, e.g. diplomacy
6. **SUFFICIENT FORCE** - the amount of force used must be only enough to succeed - no more
7. **CIVILIANS** - no civilians should be involved, and no deliberate unnecessary cruelty.

Poor Juliet Easily Reheated Last Saturday's Chips

Until the 20th century, it was possible to fight a just war. Most Churches supported their countries when they were at war. Very few Christians were pacifists.

BUT, many Christians and churches began to change their minds about war in the 20th Century: Why?

1. World War I: 9 million dead and 21 million injured started to change people's minds. Christians began to feel they had been wrong to support and encourage this!
2. World War II: most Christian churches agreed it was important to fight Hitler, but many were unhappy about the methods used, e.g. "carpet bombing" cities such as London and Dresden. Both sides deliberately targeted civilians. 50% of those killed were civilians. This went against the "Just War Theory" because civilians were being killed, and unnecessary force was used.
3. Atomic Bombs: 1945, 2 atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki to end the Second World War. Some Christians believed that this was necessary to bring a swift end to the war. Other Christians were horrified - thousands were vaporised; radiation killed thousands more; adults and children developed cancer; for years after babies were born dead or seriously deformed. Many Christians said it was totally against Jesus' teaching, and should never be allowed to happen again.

Today, most churches agree with the Just War theory, but many Christians believe it is impossible to have a "just war".

Churches and Christians have had to rethink their attitudes to war and violence.

\$1000 billion is spent every year on weapons. Should Christians be campaigning for this money to be spent on health, education, ending third world poverty and debt, etc.? Is it right for churches to support war when millions are dying of hunger and disease?

- Is it right for a church to encourage its members to fight for their country in a time of war?
- Is it right for the church to support a country which builds nuclear weapons?
- Should the church support conscientious objectors?
- How should Christians defend the weak and helpless if they do not use violence?

Roman Catholic Church teaching

The RC has a poor history of pacifism, e.g. The Crusades and the Spanish Inquisition.

1. Today, it encourages their members to pray and work for peace.
2. A war should be a last resort but sometimes it is a necessary evil.
3. It encourages Catholics to fight evil, but allows them to use their consciences.
4. If someone does not want to fight on religious grounds, they are encouraged to do a non-combatant role, e.g. stretcher-bearer, nurse, etc..
5. Nuclear weapons must only be used as a deterrent and must never be used to attack whole populations or cities. Countries who have nuclear weapons should work towards reducing them.

Church of England teaching

1. War is sometimes "an unfortunate necessity", to prevent even worse evil.
2. A Government has a duty to defend its people, therefore war may sometimes be right and just.
3. Individuals should follow their own consciences about whether or not to fight in the war.
4. "Church and the Bomb" Report, 1983: Britain needs some kind of nuclear weapons as a deterrent, but countries should work together to try to get rid of nuclear weapons.

Methodist Church teaching

Accepts the right of individuals to follow their own consciences about whether or not to fight in a war.

"The Christian pacifist does not necessarily condemn the use of every kind of force, but refuses to employ force unnecessarily or to destroy others. For example in either personal or state violence."

[The Methodist Church in *What the Churches Say*, CEM 1995]

Quaker (Society of Friends) teaching - PACIFISTS!

1. The only branch of the Christian Church to be openly pacifist.
2. Evil cannot be overcome with the use of weapons which harm or kill.
3. Christians should use the weapons of love, truth and peace to overcome evil.
4. Against the possession and use of nuclear weapons.

Christians should fight injustice and aggression, but in a non-violent way.

Pacifism

Pacifists are opposed to violence. They fight for peace and justice, but in a non-violent way. Many Christians, especially Quakers, are pacifists because the Bible and Jesus emphasise love as the way to overcome evil.

CND : Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament - A pacifist organisation which fights for justice. Set up by Monsignor Bruce Kent, a former Roman Catholic priest. There is a Christian wing of CND called "Christian CND".

Conscientious Objectors

Some Christians have become conscientious objectors who refuse, on the basis of conscience, to fight in a war. In the First World War 16,000 men in Britain refused to fight, on the grounds of conscience. Conscientious Objectors can serve in non-combatant roles. A Conscientious Objector does not need to be a pacifist - he may just object to a particular war.

William Harris, a Christian, was a Conscientious Objector in WWII. Why? He believed...

- Killing life is wrong.
- He cannot and will not commit murder.
- He loved his country too much to help it become so deplorable.
- War destroys the teachings of Jesus - love, mercy, compassion, etc.
- Everyone is a child of God and belongs to the family of God - war makes us forget this.

Non-Violent Protest - NVP

Some Christians believe that non-violent protest is the best response to aggression, violence and injustice. Non-violent protest is not the same as doing nothing. NVP is clever: it makes the other person look violent, and gains YOU a lot of public sympathy and support. Many Christians believe you are more likely to get what you want by using NVP!

Examples of NVP include:

- Marches and demonstrations
- Strikes
- Boycotts
- Sit-ins
- Use of the vote, if you live in a country which lets you vote!
- Disobeying unjust laws
- Refusal to pay fines and bail for unjust arrests

Martin Luther King is an excellent example of how to fight injustice using NVP. He believed it was wrong to use violence because even racists are loved by God and violence makes you as bad as the others. He used speeches, boycotts, sit-ins and other forms of peaceful protest. He thought it was more important to keep self-respect and use non-violent protest, even when his life was in danger. [More information in section on Racism]

HUMAN RIGHTS

10 December 1948 - the United Nations drew up the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The United Nations set out the basic rights which all human beings should be allowed. These include:

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights
Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person
No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment
No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile
Everyone has a right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.

These rights should belong to everyone, irrespective of colour, race, sex, religion, social class or place of birth, simply because they are a member of the human race. In return, every one must respect the rights, freedom and needs of others. All Christian Churches support The UN Declaration of Human Rights.

In many countries, basic human rights are not recognised.

People who disagree with the government often "disappear" - taken away by police and put in prison, tortured or killed. Families are never told where they are, and the Government denies everything. People with power and money can carry on with criminal activities, while the poor and uneducated are not given fair trials at all. Some people are "prisoners of conscience"; they are locked up because of their religious or political beliefs, and sometimes just because of the colour of their skin.

How should Christians respond to the abuse of human rights?

Christians believe that all people have human rights because they are all created by God in his image and loved by God as individuals. It is the duty of Christians to show God's love by caring for the poor and weak, and speaking out against injustice.

"Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners, and those who are maltreated as if you yourselves were suffering." *St Paul, Hebrews 13:3*

Human rights are the responsibility of Christians. Christians must fight for human rights because

1. All people belong to the family of God, so we are responsible for each other.
2. Genesis 1:27 - All humans are created in the image of God, and everyone has an eternal destiny (Heaven, salvation). All humans must be respected because God made and loves them equally.
3. Jesus taught.....
 - a) When we help the needy or visit prisoners, we do it to Christ (*Matthew 25:31-46*).
 - b) Christians must **"love your neighbour as yourself"** (*Matthew 22:39*), i.e. everyone.
 - c) **"Do to others what you would want them to do to you."**

"Faith without action is dead." *James 2:17*

James (Jesus' brother) says that true faith must lead to genuine action for those in need.

Christians must ACT to defend those whose human rights are threatened / taken away, and help prisoners of conscience

- Individual Christians should make sure they do not threaten the human rights of others.
- Local churches should make sure that they work for human rights, e.g. by having equality; taking responsibility for each other; safeguarding the rights of others; not allowing discrimination; defending the poor and the weak; working hard so that all people can live free as God intended them to be.
- If local churches can do this, it should help lead to global change.

RC Church and CofE support the UN Declaration on Human Rights.

RC Church

"Each individual man is truly a person. He has a nature that is endowed with intelligence and free will. As such he has rights and duties ... these rights and duties are universal and inviolate"

Pope John XXIII, 1963

CofE

"Rights can be established on the basis of the doctrine of the image of God when we consider those human characteristics which are both distinctively human and shared with God"

Church of England report, 1977

Amnesty International

Started 1961 by British lawyer Peter Benenson. He read in a newspaper about 2 Portuguese students sentenced to 7 years' imprisonment for raising their glasses in a toast to freedom in a Lisbon bar. He believed that injustice should not be allowed to happen - if people got together and protested, corrupt governments would not be able to get away with it.



AI main aims

- Freeing prisoners of conscience.
- Gaining fair trials for political prisoners.
- Ending torture, political killings and "disappearances".
- Abolishing the death penalty throughout the world.

AI exposes abuses of human rights throughout the world. AI....

- Has a research department which collects information throughout the world
- Sends people to attend trials, meet prisoners and government officials
- Organises letter writing campaigns, and campaigns against human rights abuses using non-violent protest.
- Helps practically e.g. getting food, clothing, medical treatment, legal advice for anyone being abused.

Amnesty International was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1977.

MANY CHRISTIANS JOIN AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL: WHY?

AI is not a Christian organisation, but many Christians support it because it is a way of putting Christian beliefs into practice.

1. Christians and AI want to achieve the same aim, so joining together gives Christians the power to do something about human rights abuses.
2. Christians feel it is a good way of demonstrating their beliefs about the value of human life, and putting agape love into practise.
3. Very importantly, AI uses non-violent protest.

What is Liberation Theology?

Liberation theology says that Christians should unite with the poor and oppressed, and speak out against injustice and abuses of human rights. Being kind to the poor or oppressed is not enough: the whole system should be challenged and changed so that there is no more poverty or oppression.

Liberation theologians are inspired by the words of Jesus:

"He has sent me to bring good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to the captives and to set the oppressed free" *Luke 4:18-19*

Many Roman Catholic priests have put themselves in great danger. Many had been imprisoned, tortured and murdered because of their beliefs, because they have stood up for the poor and oppressed. Some have used Non-Violent Protest. Others have used weapons.

Some Liberation Theology priests have said that if the poor can not be defended peacefully, then it has to involve weapons. Fr. Camilo Torres was a Roman Catholic priest in Colombia who was so appalled at the corrupt government that he joined Colombia's National Liberation Army and became a guerrilla fighter. He called on all Christians to join in the fight against oppression. He was killed in 1966.

Fr. Oscar Romero was a Roman Catholic Archbishop in El Salvador.

He believed that Christians have a duty to defend the weak and fight injustice, but without using violence. Instead, he used his sermons to preach about the rights of the poor and to criticise the government. In 1980, while he was celebrating mass, he was shot dead. Other people were killed for having listened to him.



WORLD COMMUNITY

WEALTH AND POVERTY

The North - South divide. The world today is very sharply divided to in the rich and the poor
Food and resources are not distributed evenly.

Some statistics

North – developed countries

25% of the world's population

use 4/5ths of the world's resources, e.g. food and fuel

4/5th of world income

life expectancy – 70 years

12 children out of 1000 die before age 5

94% of the world's healthcare

470 people per doctor, 140 people per nurse
easy access to medical care

Water - 100% access to clean water. No droughts.

Food - virtually no hunger

malnutrition kills virtually nobody

90% of children get secondary education

South – developing countries

75% of world population

use 1/5 of the world resources

1/5th of world income – most get less than £1.25 a week

life expectancy – less than 50 years

100+ out of 1,000 die before age 5

6% of the world's health care

14,000 people per doctor, 3,000 people per nurse
most (70%) never encounter medical health

Water - 70% get disease ridden, dirty water. 1 in 7 have serious droughts and water shortages

Food - 1 billion people (20% world population) – not enough food

malnutrition causes 4 million childhood deaths per year
40,000 people die every day of starvation, malnutrition, hunger and disease – most of which is preventable

10% of children get secondary education

ABSOLUTE POVERTY

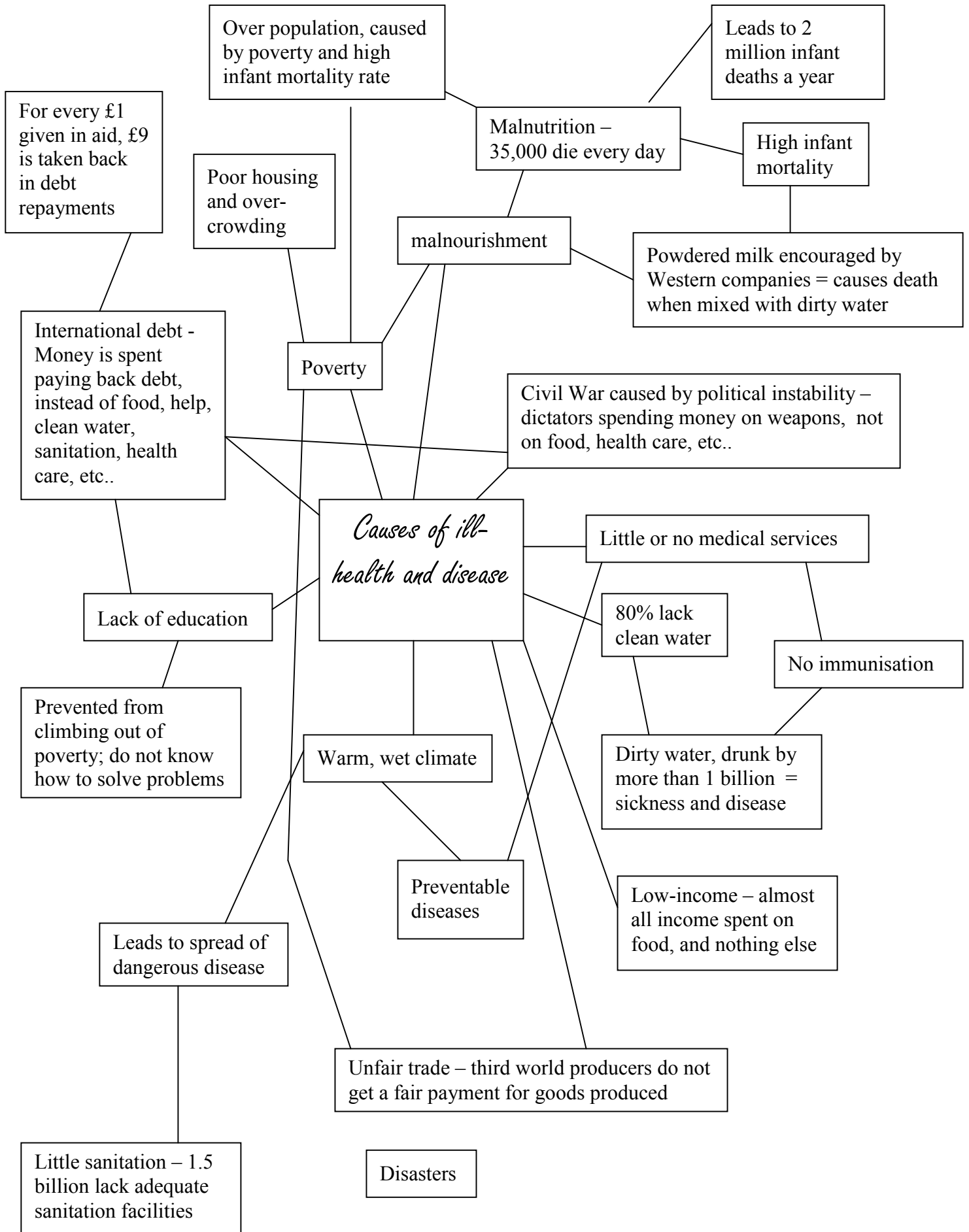
"Absolute poverty is a condition of life so characterised by malnutrition, illiteracy, disease, high infant mortality and low life expectancy as to be beneath any reasonable definition of human dignity." (Robert Macnamara)

1 billion people, 1/5 of the world's population, live in absolute poverty. While we worry about dieting, 35,000 people starve to death every day. They will never realise their full potential. They are caught in a poverty trap of no schools, hospitals, employment, technology, transport or communications.

Many of the world's poorest countries in South America and Africa are caught in debt, environmental problems and overpopulation. The majority of people earn less than £100 a year (the average wage in the UK is £17,000). While you are reading this some 450 million people are starving to death.

The causes of hunger and disease are complex. On the following page are some of the main causes. The spider diagram is meant to show how the causes are often inter-linked.

[You do not need to learn this page - just get the basic idea!]



The 1980 Brandt Report

Willy Brandt chaired a commission which looked at the extent of world poverty, differences between rich and poor, and the reasons for these differences. The Brandt Report said that:

1. Sending food in times of crisis was not enough.
2. Long-term action was needed.
3. The causes of poverty had to be tackled. This would involve making changes in the Developed World (rich countries), not just the Developing World (poor countries).

Main causes of poverty

1. Population explosion

The world's population will double to 14 billion by 2050.

Main problems this will cause

- Housing – millions / billions will be without adequate housing.
- Hunger and poverty will rise massively.
- Increase in large cities (built on agricultural land) = more problems like drugs, crime and violence.
- pollution: more people = more human waste = pollution of oceans, rivers, skies, etc.
- war and violence: more and more people will fight over less and less resources.

Many people believe that "It's their own fault for having too many kids!"

However, they have large families because of **poverty**. They need large families to survive -e.g. grow crops; make sure some children live to be adults; look after parents when they grow old (there is no old age pension).

2. Disasters

Disasters seem to occur regularly in the Developing World, e.g. floods, disease and famine. Because of poverty, their homes are flimsy and easily destroyed. There is little extra food or medicines. They have few resources or an infrastructure to deal with serious disaster.

3. Conflict

Major cause of poverty in developing countries is war, either against another country, or civil war. Instead of spending money on education, health or agriculture, countries spend money on weapons. War destroys schools, infrastructure and hospitals. Landmines and bombs destroy farming land. People are fighting instead of planting and harvesting crops. Many become refugees.

4. Debt

For every £1 given in aid, £9 is taken back in debt repayments. Debt is a major problem. In the 1960s and 1970s, Developing Countries took out loans from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and rich countries. The debts have to be paid back with interest, and countries often end up owing far more than they can afford to pay back. The IMF then imposes "Structural Adjustment Programmes", which forces the country to cut down on healthcare and education, so they can pay the debt.

Africa's interest repayments cost four times as much as is spent on health care.

In Zambia, between 1990 and 1993, debt repayments cost 34 times as much as the country was able to spend on primary school education – education spending fell by more than 80%.

5. Fair trade

Rich Developed Countries buy goods such as sugar, cotton and coffee from the poor South. However, poor countries receive low prices because people in the North want cheap groceries. This keeps people in poverty.

6. Education and child labour

250 million+ children between 5 and 14 work (often dangerously) in factories, fields, and on the streets. In the poorest countries, most adults cannot read or write. Most children never get a secondary education because they work to bring in money for the family. Most of these are girls.

Lack of education brings problems such as:

- People can not change their lives
- fewer employment opportunities
- it makes receiving health education much more difficult.

Rich countries need education, too. They do not deliberately buy goods from companies that cheat the poor – they simply do not know what is going on.

Bible teaching about caring for the poor

Old Testament - The Old Testament says God wants people to care for the poor and treat them with justice....

"If there is among you a poor man, you shall open your hand to him, and lend him sufficient for his need, whatever it may be." *Deuteronomy 15:7-8*

Loving God involves keeping God's commandments. Christians should care for each other, and especially those in need.

"There will always be some people who are poor and in need, and so I command you to be generous to them." *Deut. 15:11*

"If one of your countrymen becomes poor and cannot support himself, you must provide for him....., so that he can continue to live among you...you must not lend him money at interest or sell him food at a profit." *Leviticus 25:35-37*

The Prophet Amos was quite clear: God was not impressed with religious rituals, because outside the Temple they were cheating the poor. What God wants is justice!

"I hate, I despise your religious feasts; I cannot stand your ceremonies.....I will not listen. But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream." *Amos 5:24*

They sell into slavery honest men who cannot pay their debts.....the trampled the poor, weak and helpless, and push the sick out of the way." *Amos 2:6-7*

God wants people not to be greedy, and cancel debts when someone cannot pay. This can apply to the international debt situation today.....

"At the end of every seven years..... every creditor shall release what he has lent to his neighbour..." (i.e. cancel any debts). *Deuteronomy 15:7-8*

Third world debt and unfair trade can be seen as killing and stealing.

"You shall not kill" "You shall not steal" *Exodus 20 (the 10 Commandments).*

People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. *1 Timothy 6:9-10*

New Testament

Jesus was very concerned for the poor and oppressed. At the start of his mission he said:

"The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed...." *Luke 4:18-19*

Jesus said the poor have a special place with God....

"Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who hunger now, we will be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh." *Luke 6:20-21*

Jesus taught that the two greatest commandments are....

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength....love your neighbour as yourself." *Mark 12:30-31*

Jesus told the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) to show that God wants people to help anyone in need, even if they are your enemies.

Jesus told the parable of The Final Judgement (the parable of the Sheep and the Goats) to show:

- caring for the poor is the same as caring for Jesus; ignoring the poor is ignoring Jesus
- at the final judgement, people will be judged by God on whether they have done agape love....

At the final judgement, God will say to the people he wants in Heaven..."come into my kingdom....."

I was hungry and you fed me, I was thirsty and gave me drink....

I tell you, when if you did this for the least of these brothers of mine, you did it for me." *Matthew 25:35-40*

Jesus reached out to the poor, blind, lame, diseased, the oppressed, unwanted and unloved. He did not just ignore them and pray about the situation - he did something. If Jesus did this, Christians should do the same.

The first Christians shared everything they had - they were not greedy. Everyone got what they needed. This is an example of how a just and fair world should be.....

"The group of believers was one in mind and heart. None of them said that any other belongings were their own, but they all shared with one another everything they had.....there was no one in the group who was in need. Those who owned fields or houses would sell them, bring the money received from the sale.....and the money was distributed to each one according to his need " *Acts 4:32-35*

Roman Catholic teaching on the causes of poverty

1. Unfair distribution of money, food and resources.
2. International debt.
3. The Cold War (Russia Vs. the West) - countries spent money on weapons rather than aid for developing countries.
4. Population explosion.
5. Avoidable problems, e.g. dirty water, lack of basic medicines, etc..
6. War causes poverty, under, disease, famine and refugees.

RC Church says the underlying cause is **SIN**

Humans disobey God's laws, and think more about politics, power and money instead of morals, human rights, justice, fairness, and the way God wants the world to be. The world is in this state because of human greed and selfishness. It is not enough to pray about the situation if we are the cause of it.

"True happiness is not found in riches or well-being, in human fame or power, or in any human achievement... God blesses those who come to the aid of the poor and rebukes those who turn away from them. Rich nations have a grave moral responsibility towards those which are unable to ensure the means of their development by themselves." *Roman Catholic Catechism*

General Synod of the Church of England, 1981

"The Synod [believes] that, as a matter of common humanity and of our mutual interest in survival, the world requires a new and more equitable system of economic relationships between nations."

Main Christian beliefs - a summary

1. Christians have a duty to care for those in need. Giving is an important part of Christian Life.
2. Christians must act on their beliefs and help the needy; by doing this helping God.
3. All humans are created **"in the image of God"** Genesis 1:27; we are equal in God's eyes - we therefore have a responsibility to help all people.
4. We all belong to the family of God.
5. Christian Love is based on compassion and action.
6. God wants a world of justice and fairness, according to the Bible. It is human sin and disobedience which destroys this and stops justice.

Christians question if it is right to spend so much on weapons when so many people in the world are starving, lack the basics, lack hospitals, schools and sanitation. It would cost an estimated \$17 billion a year to provide food, water, education, health and housing for everyone. World spending on military equipment is \$1000 billion.

For Christians, the first priority with the world's resources is to ensure everyone's basic needs are met. No individual, group or country has the right to monopolise or squander resources when there are other people suffering for lack of those resources. Christians should work to promote a more equal distribution of resources.

"When I give food to the poor they call me a saint, When I ask why the poor have no food, they call me a communist."

Archbishop Oscar Romero - murdered in South America for his protest.



Christian beliefs in action

There are many different ways in which Christians might demonstrate love and concern for poor.

1. Work with the poor in a developing country (e.g. aid worker/nurse).
2. Spend a year or two working in developing countries e.g. VSO (Voluntary Service Overseas).
3. Spend a few hours a week helping a charity shop, street collection, door-to-door collection as part of Christian Aid Week.
4. Take part in fund raising activities, e.g. sponsored walks.
5. Live a simple life-style, buying only what is needed - money saved could be given to charity.

6. Try not to be wasteful; give used clothes and books to charity shops.
7. Buy FAIR TRADE products, and avoid buying from companies which exploit the poor.
8. Use a bank which shows concern for developing countries (e.g. the Co-Operative Bank).
9. Prayer.
10. Donate money to charity on a regular basis.

Because of their beliefs, many Christians will support charities which help the poor, whether they are Christian charities or not, e.g. *Oxfam*, *Save the Children* and *Comic Relief*. For Christians, helping the poor is not the choice. It is a duty, an obligation - something they must do.

"Faith by itself, which is not accompanied by action, is dead!" James 2:14-16

Christian Aid

Christian Aid is the official aid agency of over 40 different church denominations in the UK and Ireland. They work in 70+ countries, on more than 700 local projects.

Christian Aid

What does Christian Aid do?

1. Emergency Relief work

Emergency help to victims of disasters, floods, earthquakes and famines



2. Long-term development

Christian Aid also tackles the causes of poverty and injustice. Rather than waiting for a crisis to happen, they work to make changes that will improve people's lives in the long-term, e.g.

- Gives people skills and education so they can be self-reliance, not dependant on charity.
- Teaches people how to improve farming methods.
- Campaigns for fair wages to be paid to workers, and for fair trade conditions.
- Provides medicines, and sets up health, education and immunisation programmes, training local people to become nurses and midwives.
- Provides education for children, adults and especially women. Women are taught skills and crafts, so they can produce goods to sell to support their families. Christian Aid supports women because they are often left to bring up children alone when their husbands are killed in war or by terrorists.

Christian Aid works in partnership with local communities, encouraging them to find solutions to their own problems, to be self-sufficient. C.A. provides resources, funds and expertise if needed.

Jubilee 2000

Christian Aid helped set up Jubilee 2000, which put pressure on governments to cancel world debt and allow the poorest countries to use their money for food, health, education, etc. The Church called the year 2000 a "Jubilee Year". In the Bible, there is a rule that in Jubilee Years, debts are to be cancelled and slaves are to be freed. Christian Aid still campaigns with different Christians from around the world to have debt cancelled.



Income approx. £50 million a year.

- 52% = Development, helping communities to help themselves.
- 17% = emergency relief e.g. after a disaster.
- The rest = education, health and sanitation, protecting refugees and fighting for democracy and freedom. They also educate rich people in developed countries about what they can do to help.

Why do they do this work?

1. Their work is a direct response to their Christian Faith.
2. They believe God loves everyone equally, so they try to put God's love into practise.
3. They believe God can be found in every human being, because we all made in the image of God. Because of this, no-one has the right to cause injustice, international debt, etc..
4. They try to help establish God's kingdom on earth - fairness, love, justice and peace.
5. Christian Aid is putting Jesus's example into practice.
6. Christian Aid tries to put the Bible's message into practice.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Every day we hear about pollution, global warming and animal species facing extinction. Although human beings are the most intelligent life on the earth, they are responsible for almost all the damage which has been done. All of our water, food, medicines and fuel come from the world's natural resources. Human population is growing rapidly, so is our consumption of these resources, many of which are non-renewable, i.e. they cannot be replaced.

Main problems facing the planet

Ozone layer There are large holes in the ozone layer, and ultraviolet rays are causing eye cataracts and cancers.

Climate change and global warming The earth's temperature is increasing because of a build up of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. This will cause climate change, rising sea levels, storms, hurricanes, floods and death.

Deforestation

$\frac{1}{2}$ of the world's rainforests have been chopped down since 1945. An area the size of the UK is lost every week. Rainforests cover 6% of world's surface, but contain 50% of all species and plants, some of which provide vital medicines. Natural habitats are being destroyed. The long-term effects on the world are still unknown.

Pollution and Waste are building up, including acid rain, nuclear waste, toxic waste and chemicals.

Population pressure The population explosion means greater pressure on the world's resources.

Urban explosion Cities are doubling or troubling in size every 12 years; this means loss of green land, and an increase in urban problems such as drugs, crime and violence.

Food and fresh water shortages 1 billion people are chronically hungry, but the world's population will rise for another 50 years. More and more people will want fewer resources, leading to more war and violence.

Is Christianity to blame for the environmental crisis?

Some people believe that Christianity should take some of the blame. Because it teaches that God gave humans "dominion" over the world, Christianity has given people the impression that they can put themselves first. Another problem for Christians is that it is the developed countries of the North which are using up the world's resources and causing environmental problems. The religion of the North is Christianity!

However, dominion does not mean domination. The Bible says humans are in charge, but God wants humans to act responsibly and wisely, not to wreck it.

Church teaching on the environment

Christian Churches have become more aware of environmental damage, and that people have failed to be responsible stewards.

All Christian Churches teach that the world and everything in it was created by God. The earth and all life is a gift from God, to be looked after. Humans were put in charge of the planet to take care of it and look after all life. Christians believe they have responsibility to look after the planet because this is what God wants. It is an important part of a Christian's duty to look after the planet, and be responsible stewards. They teach that agape love must include future generations, too.

The Bible and the environment

Genesis 1:1 - The world is God's creation. It is a good creation, and God "was pleased with what he saw". This phrase is repeated 6 times. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." *Genesis 1:1*

"...and God looked at everything he had made and he was very pleased." *Genesis 1:31*

Stewardship - humans were put on the planet to look after it on behalf of God.

Genesis 1-3. God put Adam in the Garden of Eden to look after it on behalf of God. Humans were created in the image of God, and told to be stewards of the earth - caretakers. God put humans in charge of all living things, to look after God's belongings, not abuse them.

"God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to till it and keep it." *Genesis 2:15*

"You made him ruler of everything you made; you appointed him over all creation." *Psalms 8:6*

Human disobedience and sin is the reason why the earth is being abused.

Adam and Eve (all humans) deliberately disobeyed God and his laws. They gave into temptation and did what they wanted. As a result destruction was brought to the Garden of Eden and sin and death entered into the world.

The following two phrases have often been used as an excuse to exploit the planet:

1. Human beings "will have power over the fish, the birds, and all the animals" - *Genesis 1:26*
2. God told humans "have many children so their descendants will live all over the earth, and bring it under their control. I'm putting you in charge over the fishes, the birds and your wild animals."

But this is wrong. Humans are to be stewards of God's creation, not abusers! However, these 2 passages do show that humans are special, because they are made in the image of God, and can have a relationship with Him.

Many of the psalms praise God for the creation of the world...

The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it. *Psalms 24:1* "The heavens declare the glory of the Lord" *Psalms 19:1-4*

In this Psalm, the writer looks at the night sky, and thinks about the enormous privilege and responsibility stewardship is! The writer believes..

- a) Heavens and the earth were created by God.
- b) Humans are special to God because they are stewards of Creation - they look after it for God.

When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him?.... You made him ruler over the works of your hands. *Psalms 8:3-6*

God loves and cares for the whole world - not just humans

Christians often thought that God made the world solely for them! But this is not found in the Bible.

Noah and the Flood, Genesis 9. God saved both humans and animals - not just humans.

After the flood, God made a covenant (agreement) with humans and all living beings.

10 commandments - Deuteronomy 5:12-14 - every week, all animals must have a day of rest - not just humans. Even the land must have a rest every seven years...

"The seventh year is to be a Year of complete rest of the land" *Leviticus 25:4*

Some of the Old Testament rules are about good stewardship

e.g., there are rules about harvesting. In Old Testament times, "gleaning" was common. After a field had been harvested, any grain which had fallen on the ground or had been missed by the harvest was left for the poor who would be allowed to go and collect it for their use.

"When you're harvesting in your field and you overlook a sheaf (some wheat), do not go back and get it. Leave it for the foreigner, the orphan and the widow, so that the Lord your God may bless you." *Deuteronomy 24:19-22*

This reminds people not to take every last scrap for themselves; they should make sure they leave something behind for the people who will come after them.

"The land is mine.....you are my tenants." *Leviticus 25:19-22*

The New Testament: there are passages which show the belief that God created every living thing.....

"Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?" *Jesus, Matthew 6:26-29*

However, the New Testament says that through his death, Jesus brought the whole of Creation back to God, not just humans.

"Through the Son, God decided to bring the whole universe back to himself. Of make peace through his son's death from across and so brought back to himself all things, both on earth and in heaven." *Colossians 1:20*

The early Christians used to share their resources with each other.

"The group of believers was one in mind and heart. None of them said that any other belongings were their own, but they all shared with one another everything they had.....there was no one in the group who was in need. Those who owned fields or houses would sell them, bring the money received from the sale.....and the money was distributed to each one according to his need." *Acts 4:32-35*

Church of England – General Synod 1992.

The C of E agreed.....

1. To take all possible steps to minimize pollution and to use the world's resources carefully.
2. To work towards reducing damage to plants and animals.
3. To take positive steps towards population control.

"This Synod, affirming its belief and trust in God the Father who made the world, believes that the domination given to human beings over the natural order is that of **Stewards**."

Roman Catholic Church

1. People have a responsibility to think about the amount we consume.
2. We should plan for the welfare of future generations.
3. Consider the impact that the behaviour of richer countries has on the developing nations.

1988 statement:

"The earth and all life on it is a gift from God given to us to share and develop, not to dominate and exploit."

"Our actions have consequences for the rights of others and for the resources of the earth."

"The goods of the earth and the beauties of nature are to be enjoyed and celebrated."

"We have the responsibility to create a balanced policy between consumption and conservation."

"We must consider future generations in our planning for, and use of, the earth's resources."

Methodist Church, Conference 1991

"The universe as whole is a product of God's creative and imaginative world. All of its parts are interdependent. Men and women are to be stewards, not exploiters, of its resources. Christians must support those working for conservation and the development of more appropriate, sustainable lifestyles."

Christian responses to environmental issues

World Council of Churches

"The dignity of nature as Creation needs to be bound up with a responsibility for the preservation of life."

Assisi Declaration 1986

"Christians repudiate all ill-consider exploitation of nature which threatens to destroy it and, in turn, to make man the victim of degradation."

Christians might put their faith into action in a variety of ways. They could.....

- Vote for candidates who show concern for environmental issues
- Pray about environmental problems
- Try to live a simple life-style. E.g. recycling, using bottle banks, making garden compost, etc
- Use less fuel, buy energy efficient appliances, insulate homes properly, install solar panels
- Organise car sharing, or walk or cycle to work
- Take part in protests, marches and demonstrations, write to MPs
- Join a "green" organisation, e.g. Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace, Christian Ecology Link

Organisations which Christians might support

Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth and the Worldwide Fund for Nature. All of them are involved in campaigns and protests. None of them is Christian, but Christians might support them, or one of their campaigns, because

- It is a way of putting their beliefs about stewardship and concern for others into practice.
- These are non-violent organisations, but which will take part in non-violent protest.

However, it is can be difficult for Christians to live a green lifestyle because Western society is a consumer society - everyone is encouraged to buy more and more, and to waste more and more of the world's resources. Christians are only human, and can find it hard to go against the rest of society.

Many Christians do not think that the environment is anything to do with Christianity!

Some Christians simply do not see any link between Christianity and environment. The Bible does not mention the ozone layer / greenhouse effect. Others say that Christianity should be saving people's souls, not the planet. They are frightened that caring for the environment has New Age links.

Christian Action for the Environment

Christian action for the environment has, in fact, been very little, compared with other big issues. There have been many reports, leaflets, statements and conferences, but little practical action, partly because Churches are involved with so many social issues that they cannot dedicate much time or resources to the environment. However, there have been some practical Christian responses to the environment.

Christian organisations such as Christian Aid, CAFOD and Tear Fund have noticed a direct link between the greedy lifestyles of the rich North, and environmental destruction.

Nottingham Churches Environment Network - NCEN

Founded in 1993, NCEN

- Produced a video "How Green is Your Church?"
- Produced a newsletter called "Greenleaf" -circulation of 6,000 in Nottingham
- Set up talks, conferences and meetings
- Set up door-to-door recycling schemes, recycling centres on church grounds
- Advised churches in practical ways on how to become more green
e.g. applied for funding for green projects on behalf of churches, gave practical advice, helped churches set up solar panels and wind turbines, low-energy light bulbs, etc..



Christian Ecology Link - CEL

Largest national organisation for Christians concerned about the environment.

For 20 years, it has

- Set up national conferences - often attended by MPs and members of the cabinet.
- Published a journal called "Green Christians".
- Carried out ecological audits for churches.
- Set up practical environmental projects.
- Campaigned on major issues.
- Organised events such as "Car Free Sunday".



However, only 500 people are members of Christian Ecology Link - out of millions of Christians in the UK!!!

A good man leaves an inheritance for his children's children

Proverbs 13:22

Keep safe what has been entrusted to you.

1 Timothy 6:20