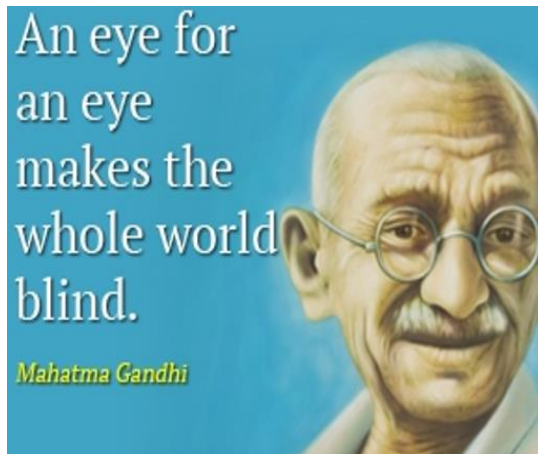
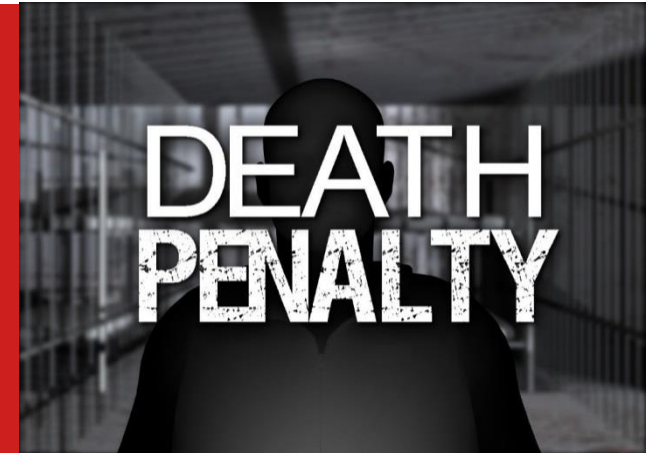


RELIGION, CRIME & PUNISHMENT INFORMATION BOOKLET



**FREE
WILL**



What are crime and punishment?

A crime is any action which is against the law that has been put in place by the rulers of any state. In the UK the government must get the approval of parliament before any new crimes are written into law. The police arrest people who are suspected of having broken the law by committing crimes. If after questioning the police are confident they have got the right person, they charge them with having committed the offence.



In the UK laws are made in Parliament

Once charged with a serious crime in the UK, suspected offenders face a hearing in front of a local magistrate before being required to appear in a crown court before a judge and jury of 12 people selected at random. Less serious cases are dealt with by a magistrates court, while some more minor crimes result in the police giving the offender an official caution if they admit they are guilty.

Offenders who are found guilty by a court face a legal punishment. Most serious offences would result in a much lengthier prison sentence such as murder, which is a life sentence. However, this rarely means offenders spend the rest of their lives in prison. Less serious offences are punished with shorter spells in prison, or with non-custodial sentences such as community service or a fine. If a court decides that the person has committed no crime, they are released without any punishment. Under no circumstances in the UK can a court impose a sentence intended to cause physical harm (corporal punishment) or death (capital punishment). However, in some countries such as China, parts of the USA and Saudi Arabia the death sentence is permitted.

In no instance is an individual victim of a crime allowed to punish the offender. Such action is against the law and is punishable by law. Civil law is different from criminal law. Civil law concerns disputes between private individuals or groups. This includes such matters as the settlement of a divorce, disputes between landlords and tenants and disputed wills. Cases are usually dealt with in a small claims court although in more serious cases the case is heard in the Crown Court. In some UK cities Muslims have been allowed to set up their own Shari'ah law court to make judgements on some civil matter within their community e.g. Divorce.

Good and evil intentions and actions

The teachings in the Bible warn against having any evil or wrong thoughts and intentions.

“You have heard it said to the people long ago, ‘You shall not murder’ and anyone who murders will be subject to judgement”

Matthew 5:21-22 (NIV)

Many people would say that any action that obeys the law is a good action. However a good action also includes that which is good but not specified in law, such as generosity and love. There is no law that dictates supporting charities, but offering support in some way to a good cause is usually considered to be a good thing. Likewise, many Christians and Muslims believe even though actions such as adultery are not against the law, they are still considered wrong. Actions encouraged or required by genuine religious faith are considered to be good. Society usually considers actions which are encouraged or required by genuine religious faith to be good actions when they benefit other people.

Evil actions are often violent or result in violence, and sometimes involve much innocent suffering. Suffering may also include injury and death. Such actions can include mass murder, serial killing, causing a terrorist explosion, and multiple rape or repeated serious child abuse. These are the types of crimes that can result in life imprisonment with no chance of early release. In the UK, punishments for crime will often take into account the intention of the guilty person, for example whether they intended to use violence. Intentions can determine how severe the punishment should be. But some people argue that intention is a less important factor to consider, compared to the impact of a crime.

In a religious sense, evil can be linked with the devil (Satan) who is the source of all that is considered evil. However, when Christians speak about evil criminal actions, they usually mean that the offence is profoundly immoral and wicked rather than directly linked to the devil. Christianity generally considers crimes involving violence against people as sinful and against God.

A Christian response

Many Christians would claim that there is no such thing as an evil person. Human beings are not perfect and make mistakes. However, the belief in original sin derived from the disobedience of Adam and Eve means that all humans have a tendency to do things that are evil even though they are not evil in themselves. If God created people to be good, they are unlikely to do something unspeakably awful unless there was a specific reason, for example a psychological illness. If this is the case, they should receive treatment for their illness while being punished for their actions.

Muslim beliefs

In a religious sense, for Muslims evil can be linked to Satan (Iblis) who was originally created by God as a spirit called jinn. He was cursed by God for refusing to bow to Adam, the first man whom God created. As a result Satan is now intent on tempting humans to choose to do wrong rather than right. When Muslims speak about evil criminal actions, they usually mean that the offence is profoundly immoral and wicked as a result of giving into temptation. Thus it is against the will of God.

Many Muslims would claim that human beings are not perfect and make mistakes. Some do evil things but this is because they have not resisted temptation and not because they are bad people. The level of punishment considered for a crime in the UK may be determined by the reasons and circumstances behind the wrongdoing. Under Shari'ah law the severity of a punishment is related to the seriousness of the religious value that has been breached by the crime (for example to not kill, or to not commit adultery). Shari'ah law puts great emphasis on the beliefs and intentions of a person, and even if you have thoughts of committing crime, it is considered as serious as committing the crime itself.



Many people who are convicted of evil actions are sentenced to imprisonment in Broadmoor Hospital, a high-security psychiatric hospital

Demonstrate your knowledge activities

1. Carefully explain meanings of 'crime' and 'punishment' in your own words.
2. Write down reasons why in the UK all people, regardless of their religion or beliefs have to obey the same law. Explain what it would be like if different people obeyed different laws.
3. Explain the difference between criminal and civil law.
4. Explain the meaning of a good action and an evil action. Give examples in your answer
5. 'There is no such thing as an evil person.' What do you think? (Try to make reference to at least one religious view.)

Civil law vs. Criminal law	
CIVIL LAW	CRIMINAL LAW
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ is concerned with disputes between individuals▪ action is taken by the aggrieved party	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ is concerned with wrongs committed against an individual but regarded as harmful to society as a whole▪ action is taken against the wrong-doer in the name of society
CLAIMANT vs DEFENDANT (PLAINTIFF)	PROSECUTOR vs DEFENDANT
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ defendant liable on the BALANCE OF PROBABILITIES <p>eg. marital dispute, hire-purchase problems, trespass, negligence etc.</p>	<p>eg. stealing, robbery, murder, rape, embezzlement, arson etc.</p>

Reasons for crime

Reasons why some people commit crime

While most people believe that all crime is wrong, sometimes how wrong it is may depend upon why it was committed. Sometimes it is due to selfishness, whereas at other times there may be circumstances that make it more understandable. As far as Christians are concerned, there is rarely any justification for committing crimes, especially as they believe that God has put law-making authorities in place. They also believe that laws are important for keeping order in society so that people may live in peace. Christians may refer to Romans 13:1 to justify their beliefs.

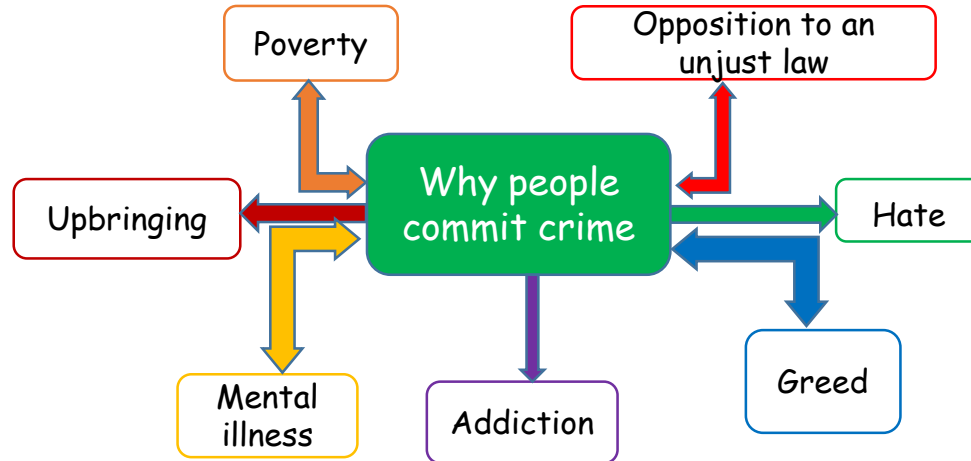
"Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established"

Romans 13:1

As far as Muslims are concerned they too think that there is no justification for committing crimes, especially in countries that follow Shari'ah law that originated in the Qur'an, the Sunnah, and hadith. This creates an orderly society in which people may live in peace.

"Those who do not judge according to what God has revealed are doing grave wrong"

Qur'an 5:45



▲ Reasons why people commit crimes

Poverty

It is a fact that in the UK, some people live in poverty and cannot afford the necessities of life. Welfare payments should cover living expenses but sometimes, for whatever reason, they do not. This can lead some people to steal food and essentials that they cannot afford to buy. Even though this may seem to be a good reason, it is still against the law and people will still be arrested for stealing.

While Christians condemn stealing they are keen to make sure that nobody is so poor that they use poverty as an excuse for stealing. In June 2015, Pope Francis said:

"Focusing on poverty and sacrificing for the poor are the heart of the gospel. If Christians don't dig deep and generously open up their wallets they do not have genuine faith."

Pope Francis

Although some Muslims live in poverty, Zakat is in place to help them. Unfortunately, it cannot provide for all who need it. Muslims hope that such community support will prevent Muslims turning to crime.

Upbringing

Growing up in a household where crime is a way of life may encourage a young person to follow the example of people they live with and drift into crime themselves. Even their parents may encourage them to commit crimes. Once they have been drawn into a life of crime, it is difficult for them to stop, even though they know that what they are doing is wrong. The Muslim emphasis is on a strong extended family should ensure that children are brought up to respect the law by following the good examples they are set.

Mental illness

Some people suffer from a mental illness that causes them to commit crimes. Kleptomania is a serious mental health disorder that compels sufferers to steal items, even if they have little value and are generally unnecessary. Anger management problems may lead to assault or murder.

In cases involving serious crimes and serious mental illnesses, the offender may be viewed as unfit to stand trial. They are likely to be sentenced to be kept in a secure unit where they receive the treatment they need, even though they have not had an actual trial. Their legal representatives will work with the court authorities to ensure justice is done.

Addiction

The nature of addiction to drugs means that the human body cannot cope without them. Addicts may resort to stealing in order to purchase the drugs their body needs.

The drug that causes more crime than any other is alcohol. People who have drunk too much alcohol lose control of their thoughts and actions to such an extent that they may commit acts of violence and get into fights, or committing murder or rape. If they drive while under the influence of alcohol, they are more likely to cause an accident than if sober. **Most denominations of Christianity do not forbid drinking alcohol, but for Catholics, drunkenness is a sin, and no denomination encourages excessive drinking.**

Muslims forbid the taking of illegal drugs and alcohol. They believe that alcohol is a temptation which will lead people to do wrong and should be resisted.

Greed

In the UK personal possessions and wealth are seen as signs of status. Greed can lead to crime, especially theft or fraud.

In the Ten Commandments, Christians are taught not to covet, which means they should not be jealous of what somebody else has, and envy is one of the seven deadly sins.

Hate

Hate is a negative feeling or reaction. It can lead to violence or aggression towards whoever or whatever the offender hates. **Hatred is against Muslim morality.**

Opposition to an unjust law

According to lawmakers, any breach of the law is wrong. However, there are occasions where people have deliberately broken laws they consider to be unjust. In the USA in 1955 Rosa Parks was arrested for breaking segregation laws by refusing to give up her seat in the bus to a white person. This act of defiance became an important symbol of the Civil Rights Movement that eventually changed unjust laws about the treatment of African Americans in the USA. Many religious people believe that any law that is based on prejudice or that breaches basic human rights is wrong and should be changed. If breaking the law brings about change, it may be seen as acceptable. **However, as Shari'ah law is God's law, and Muslims believe none of God's laws can be unjust, in countries where Shari'ah exists it should not be considered necessary to protest an unjust law.**

Some people think it is right to break laws that try to prevent public protest in order to try to change an unjust law. But in most cases protests do not intend to cause injury or death.

"Competing for more distracts you until you go into your graves."

Qur'an 102.1-2



A looted and smashed up supermarket: what might cause people to commit this sort of crime?

Christian and Muslim attitudes to lawbreakers

Christians are generally against people breaking the laws of their country without just cause. The law in the UK is there to protect the rights and security of all citizens. There are some laws that a Christian might consider to be morally wrong, and that they feel they must challenge. However they believe that in general laws protect citizens and should therefore be respected.

Muslims are against people committing crime. They believe that God has made it clear that Shari'ah law has to be obeyed, as should any just and fair law in non-Shari'ah countries. The law in the UK is there to protect the rights and security of all citizens. There are some laws that a Muslim may find it difficult to agree with, but generally laws should be respected to promote order in society.

The way that offenders are dealt with is also governed by the law. All suspected offenders are presumed to be innocent until they are proved guilty, and the courts exist to decide whether there is any doubt as to whether somebody is guilty. If there is any reasonable doubt, they are found innocent and allowed to resume their normal life without any punishment.

There are many different attitudes among Christians towards lawbreakers. Some believe a punishment should be as severe as the crime committed. In Islam punishments under Shari'ah law are severe but they do not apply in the UK. Others believe they should be helped in order that they do not offend again. While the crime may be hated, the person who committed it is not. Lawbreakers have rights and these should be protected, even while they are being punished. Christians believe that inhumane treatment of offenders is wrong.

Most Christians also believe that offenders should be helped to change their ways so that they do not reoffend once the punishment is over. In the parable of the sheep and goats, Jesus gave various actions that are pleasing to God, and these include treating prisoners well:

"Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For ... I was in prison and you came to visit me."
Matthew 25:34-36 (NIV)



Stealing is considered to be wrong, whatever the reason

"God commands justice... and prohibits wrongdoing, and injustice..."
Qur'an 16:90

This inspires Christians to treat prisoners with compassion and to consider how they may be helped as well as punished for their wrongdoings.

Different types of crime - hate crime, theft and murder

There are many different types of crime, ranging in severity from minor offenses to very serious ones such as mass murder. More severe punishments are reserved for the more serious offenses. Muslims condemn all crime. Some crimes are considered to be hate crimes. These are crimes often including violence, that are usually targeted at a person because of their race, religion, sexuality, disability or gender. Because they are targeted at a person rather than at property, as in the case of theft, they are considered to be more serious crimes. Muslims and Christians believe that God creates all humans with equal value and no individuals or groups should be singled out as inferior to others. Hate crimes make the idea of a society without prejudice or discrimination impossible to achieve.

An example of a very serious crime which in some cases may also be a hate crime, is murder. Murder means to unlawfully and deliberately kill a human being. It could well be argued that there is no greater harm that can be done than to take a person's life.

Christian attitudes to different types of crime

Christians condemn both hate crimes and murder. Jesus taught that all people should 'love their neighbour' (Mark 12:31). In this context, neighbour means everybody, regardless of their race, religion, sexuality, disability or gender. Jesus also mixed with people from all sections of society and did not turn anybody away. Echoing Jesus' teaching, Paul wrote:

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

Galatians 3:28 (NIV)

Even though Christians may be understanding of people committing theft out of need rather than greed, they believe that the needy should be cared for so they have no need to commit crimes. They teach the Golden Rule 'Do to others what you want them to do to you'. Therefore even though theft is considered to be less serious than hate crimes and murder, it is still wrong.

Shari'ah law categories of crimes

Shari'ah law classifies crimes into four types:

- **Unforgivable crimes (Hadud)** - crimes such as adultery, theft, drinking alcohol or taking drugs, rebellion against the state - all of which are prohibited in the Qur'an.
- **Forgivable crimes (Al Jynayaat)** - crimes against the right of the individual, such as bodily harm and murder, for which the victim or their family can gain credit by showing mercy.
- **Community crimes (Al Ta'azir)** - crimes that affect the community such as fraud and antisocial behaviour..
- **Crimes against the state law (Al Mukhalafat)** - crimes against a law of the state (rather than the Qur'an) such as parking offences and speeding.



Complete the following activities

1. Should offenders have rights? Give reasons for your opinion
2. Do you think it is right to hate a crime but not the person who commits it? Give reasons for your view.
3. Explain what theft, hate crimes and murder are.
4. Do you agree that theft committed due to poverty is wrong? Explain your opinion.
5. List the four types of crime in Shari'ah law.
6. Do you think this classification of four types of crime helps Muslim understand the importance of keeping the laws? Give reasons.
7. Are Christians correct in what they believe about lawbreakers and different types of crime? Explain your point of view.



At Journey House in Kansas City ,USA, women released from prison live side by side with Catholic nuns who help the women get back on their feet.

Attitudes to lawbreakers and different types of crime (Quick recap)

Many Christians and Muslims condemn (judge) the crimes people commit but do not hate the people who commit them.

Christian views	Muslim views
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Christians believe the law should be respected.• Offenders must be punished by the law according to the seriousness of the crime.• Offenders have basic rights and so should not be given a punishment that is inhumane or harmful. Through their punishment they should be helped to become a useful member of society so they do not re-offend.• The parable of the Sheep and Goat makes it clear that helping prisoners is helping Jesus: <p>"I was in prison and you came to visit me." Matthew 25:34-36 [NIV]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Some Christians think the punishment should be as severe as the crime committed.	<p>"God commands justice... and prohibits wrongdoing and injustice." Qur'an 16:90</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Muslims believe that the law must be obeyed, especially those living in countries governed by Shari'ah law.• In Britain, Muslims support the UK legal system, despite it not being Shari'ah, even though there may be some laws they do not agree with.• Shari'ah punishment fit the seriousness of the crime. Severe punishments are given for crimes prohibited in the Qur'an (such as murder, adultery, theft, and drinking alcohol), but the most severe are not used in Britain.• Shari'ah punishments are intended to be severe enough to make sure the offender does not re-offend.

Different types of crime - hate crime, theft and murder

- **Hate crimes** often involve violence and are usually targeted at a person because of their race, religion, sexuality, disability or gender.
- **Theft** is less serious than some other crimes but it still results in a victim suffering loss.
- **Murder** is one of the worst crimes. Some murders involve the victim being put in great pain before they die. Some murders are classed as hate crimes.



Religious attitudes to different types of crime

- Hate crimes are widely condemned (judged) by both Christians and Muslims. When Jesus taught that people should love their neighbour, he was referring to showing compassion, care and respect to everybody. This means that Jesus himself would condemn (judge) criminal actions because no crime shows love towards the victim.
- Murder is wrong because both Christians and Muslims believe only God has the right authority to take life.

"You shall not murder." Exodus 20:13 [NIV]

"Do not take life which God has made sacred, except by right."

Qur'an 17:33

- Similarly, theft is not permitted in the Ten Commandments. Neither Christians nor Muslims justify theft caused by the need to supply food for a family.

THE AIMS OF PUNISHMENT

Whenever a punishment is imposed by a court, the judge has to consider what purpose the punishment will serve. In the UK, no matter how severe the punishment, it is intended as a positive action - to protect society, to assist the offender, to stop others from making the same mistakes, or a combination of these. Islam teaches that another positive effect on the offender is to clean them of a sin so that he is protected from a more unbearable punishment in the afterlife.

It is generally acknowledged that punishments should not cause unnecessary, intentional harm to the offender. In the past, it hasn't always been the this way, and in some countries, it still isn't. There are three main aims of punishment: **retribution**, **deterrence** and **reformation**.

Retribution

Retribution is the least positive of the three aims of punishment. It means to get your own back. In other words, retribution means that society, on behalf of the victim, is getting its own back on the offender. An early form of retribution, introduced in the Old Testament, is called *lex talionis* (the law of retaliation). Put simply, this means that criminals should receive the same injuries and damage that they caused to their victim. In the cases of murder, this meant that the murderer was executed to match the fate of the victim.

"If there is serious injury, you are to take life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise." (Exodus 21:23)

Christians do not take this teaching literally but interpret it to mean that an offender should receive a punishment severe enough to match the seriousness of their crime. Once this principle is established, Christians prefer to focus on different aims of punishment.

In the Shari'ah system of justice, when a crime has been committed against a person substantial evidence is required to establish a guilty verdict. Any doubts or room for any doubts will make the punishment invalid and prohibited. Once the guilt has been proven beyond doubt, punishment is laid down to punish the offender on behalf of the victim, their family and their community.



This man is being punished in public for breaking Shari'ah laws on gambling

In the case of an *Al-Jinayat* (the criminal law of Islam) crime, if life is taken, the victim can opt to grant mercy and receive compensation from the offender. The victim's family can also do this on behalf of the victim, and on behalf of the society whose values have been infringed upon. Taking compensation instead of asking for the death penalty is an act of mercy and forgiveness that lessens the feelings of vengeance. The offense has been cancelled out and the offender returns to normal life without any shadow hanging over them. The offender is also believed to be released from the eternal punishment for that crime in the afterlife.

One reason why Muslims favour severe punishments is because they believe that actions in breach of Shari'ah law are actions against God who created the law. So retribution is given on God's behalf for an offense committed against God. Under Shari'ah law, adultery is treated as a crime and is punished under the law. This is not a crime in the UK, so British Muslims who commit adultery will not be punished by the UK legal system, which is the only criminal system in the country. However, as Muslims still see it as an offence to God, their punishment will be given in the afterlife by God, the ultimate judge.

Deterrence

Many believe that if offenders are seen to be punished for wrongdoing, and in some cases punished severely, the threat of similar punishment might put off others from committing crimes.

The offender themselves might also be deterred from reoffending if they do not like the punishment they receive. This is called **deterrence**. There are some people who claim that while this may be effective in controlling some people's behaviour, many doubt whether people have been persuaded not to commit murder because they don't want to spend time in prison. The reasons why people commit serious crimes may be more complex than a simple fear of a punishment. However, people considering less serious offences may be influenced by possible punishment.

Years ago in Britain, people were punished in public, for example with public floggings and executions, in order to deter others. Making such an extreme example of offenders in an effort to persuade others to obey the law is not acceptable to many Christians today, who believe that every human being should be treated with respect, regardless of what they have done. Christianity agrees with deterrence but not through such harsh punishment.

Islamic law has tough consequences for the offender in the hope that they will deter criminals. The picture of the man being punished for gambling shows quite clearly that the punishment is being carried out in public. This is so that others, as well as the offender, can learn from the punishment and be put off from committing similar offences.

Quick thoughts: Would having more severe punishments in the UK help to deter potential criminals from carrying out the crime?

Key terms:

Retribution: an aim of punishment - to get your own back: 'an eye for an eye'.

Deterrence: an aim of punishment - to put people off committing crimes.

Reformation: an aim of punishment - to change someone's behaviour for the better.



Prison is thought to deter people from committing crime.



In Britain locking people in the stocks was once a form of punishing wrongdoers..

THE AIMS OF PUNISHMENT CONTINUED

Reformation

The UK punishment system emphasises the importance of **reformation**. It is hoped that punishment will encourage offenders to change their attitude and become law-abiding members of the community. In order for this to work, the offender needs to realise that their behaviour is wrong before they can hope to be reformed. This may involve group therapy sessions, individual counselling and treatment (if required), meeting their victims so they realise the harm they may have caused, or working in the community (community service). In the UK, if a prisoner is thought to have reformed and is no longer a danger to others, they can be released early on parole.

Reformation is the aim of punishment that most Christians prefer because it seeks to help offenders by working with them to help them understand that their behaviour is harming society. Christians who favour reform rather than retribution take their inspiration from the teachings of the Bible. Paul in Romans wrote:

"Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: 'It is mine to avenge; I will repay' says the Lord. On the contrary: 'If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink {...} Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.'" (Romans 12:19-21)

This encourages Christians not to seek revenge, but instead to set an example by showing compassion. A more positive response to an offender is to work with them to help them turn their life around by helping them to understand the effect of their actions on others. However, this is not a replacement for punishment; It should be done at the same time as the punishment and is likely to happen in prison if that is where the offender is being held.

Islam also has a view on reformation. For example, it is considered necessary for offenders to seek God's forgiveness and to become purified. If they reform, this is more likely to happen. Other methods, such as education and financial advice, may also be used to help reform, depending on the specific circumstances of the crime.

Other aims of punishment.

Although you will not need to know these in detail, there are three other key aims to be aware of. **Protection** - the whole point of having a legal system is to protect society. Some criminals are dangerous and society needs protection and the criminal needs protection from society also. When a person shows no remorse for what they have done and continues to be a threat they have to be locked up. **Vindication** - the law has to impose proper punishments for crimes committed, so that the law is respected. If there are no penalties, then people will not keep the law. Rules are rules and have to be justly applied to the crime done. **Reparation** - this is a more modern aim designed at making up for what damage has been caused so the victim or society is compensated. Community service would be a good example of this.

Read the information sheet and then complete the following activities below:



1. Which of the three main aims of punishment do you prefer and why?
2. Look at these punishments - Prison, Hefty fine, Corporal punishment and Drink-drive rehabilitation course. Which one of the three main aims of punishment do they best suit and why?
3. Why do you think most Christians prefer reformation as the key aim of punishment?
4. Why do you think many Muslims agree with retribution as an aim of punishment?
5. 'All punishments should have the aim of getting criminals to see the error of their ways.' What do you think? Explain your opinion.
6. 'The only good aim of punishment is deterrence.' What do you think about this statement? Give arguments for and against and explain your answer. (12 marks)

DETERRENCE RETRIBUTION

REFORMATION

PROTECTION VINDICATION

REPARATION

Study tip: If you are asked to write about the aims of punishment, make sure you know which one is which and that you are clear about the difference between them.

CHRISTIAN ATTITUDES TO SUFFERING AND CAUSING SUFFERING TO OTHERS

Christian attitudes to suffering

For many people, suffering is an unfortunate part of living. It may be caused by something natural, such as an illness, or it may be due to how people have behaved or how somebody else has behaved. Whatever the cause, Christians believe they should try to help others who are suffering. The Bible even talks about how good can come out of suffering:

"We also glory in our suffering, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope." (Romans 5:3-4)

This was written by Paul who suffered at the hands of the Romans several times after he had become a Christian.

Christians feel that they should follow the example of Jesus, who helped many whom he saw suffering, and taught that those who believe in God should help those who suffer. Helen Keller (1880-1968), a Christian writer and activist who became deaf and blind when she was only 19 months old, summed up the Christian responsibility to help those who are suffering:

"We are never really happy until we try to brighten the lives of others."
(Helen Keller)

Charleston church shooting

In June 2015, at the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina, USA, a gunman killed 9 people, including the pastor of the church, while they attended a Bible study. Dylann Roof, a 21 year old white man, was captured by the police and confessed that he committed the murders in the hope of igniting a race war.

The murders caused suffering to the friends and family of the victims, as well as the people from the local community. However, when relatives of the victims faced Dylann Roof in a court hearing they forgave him. Nadine Collier, whose mother was murdered, told Roof in court, 'You hurt me, you hurt a lot of people, but God forgives you, and I forgive you.'

Many people question why a loving God, who cares about his people, allows them to suffer. However, it would be wrong to blame God for actions such as those of the Charleston gunman. Christians believe that God gave humanity the **free will** to behave as they choose. If they choose to follow the example of Jesus and stay close to God, they will make good choices which do not harm others. However, there are consequences, including legal punishments imposed by courts, when people choose to behave in a way that harms others and is not pleasing to God. The teachings of Jesus give guidance to help Christians to use their free will responsibly.



The congregation at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston paid tribute to those who were killed at their church

Christian attitudes to causing suffering to others

Christians are generally opposed to causing others to suffer. Jesus taught that humans should love each other and care for those in trouble. He even spoke out against using violence in self defence because of the further suffering that retaliation may cause.

However, as no human is perfect it is inevitable that Christians may be the cause of suffering, often by accident or because their minds are troubled for some reason. Having caused suffering, it is important that Christians are honest to themselves, to other people and to God, and work at repairing the damage they may have caused. This way, relationships can be restored. During Jesus' arrest:

"One of the disciples struck the servant of the High priest, cutting off his right ear. But Jesus answered 'No more of this!' And he touched the man's ear and healed him." (Luke 22:50-51)

While people cannot perform a physical healing in the way described by Luke, Christians learn from this example that if possible they should heal the wrong that has been done and the suffering that has been caused in whatever way they can.

Quick tip: Try to avoid using free will as an argument to justify behaving badly. Christians think that people must use their free will to choose what is right, not wrong.

MUSLIM ATTITUDES TO SUFFERING AND CAUSING SUFFERING TO OTHERS

Muslim attitudes to suffering

For many people, suffering is an unfortunate part of living. It may be caused by something natural such as an illness, or it may be due to their own actions or the actions of somebody else. Muslims believe that Allah (their God) is aware of all types of suffering and allows suffering to happen, usually for a reason that is not apparent to humans but which may be beneficial to them. Sometimes Muslims may consider suffering to be a test from Allah to see how the faithful person reacts or copes with it. It is not believed that Allah could allow suffering greater than a person can endure. Other forms of suffering are believed to be the result of people giving in to the temptation of Iblis (devil).

"...you are sure to be tested through your possessions and persons; you are sure to hear much that is hurtful... If you are steadfast and mindful of God, that is the best course." (Quran 3:186)



Two young women participate in a vigil for the young Muslims shot and killed in Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

Fatal shooting in Chapel Hill, North Carolina

In February 2015, three young Muslims were shot dead in their home near the university campus of North Carolina, USA. They were named as Deah Shaddy Barakat, 23, his wife Yusor Abu-Salha, 21, and her sister, Razan Abu-Salha, 19. Their killer, Craig Hicks, handed himself in to the police. Although it is claimed that the shootings were connected to a dispute over a parking space, some, including the father of the two women killed, claimed it was a hate crime based on the religion and culture of the victims. Although this cannot be proved, Hicks described himself on Facebook as an atheist and regularly posted images and texts condemning all religions

Reflection:

Does it matter whether the killing of the 3 young people in this case was a parking dispute or a hate crime?

Islam teaches that hope and faith can help believers to endure suffering. Many people question why Allah who is a loving God, who cares about his people can allow them suffer in this way. However, most Muslims believe it is wrong to blame Allah for actions such as those of Craig Hicks. Muslims believe that in times of suffering it is God's will that they live through it. They believe that God gave humanity the **free will** to behave as they choose. If they choose to follow the example and teachings of Muhammad and the Quran, and stay close to God, they should make good choices which do not harm others. However Muslims also believe that there are consequences, including legal punishments imposed by courts, when people choose to behave in a way that harms others and is not pleasing to God. The teachings of the Quran and other religious leaders give guidance to help people to use their free will responsibly.

Muslim attitudes to causing suffering to others

Causing suffering to others is against the teachings of Islam. Muslims are very much opposed to causing others to suffer. They share identity with all other Muslims within the worldwide community of Muslims (Ummah) caring and providing for brothers and sisters in need. Islam teaches Muslims not to cause others to suffer, and where there is suffering, try to alleviate it:

"Be compassionate towards the destitute." (Hadith)



The Ummah showing brotherhood in prayer.

However, no human is perfect and it is inevitable that a Muslim may be the cause of suffering, whether it be by accident or on purpose. Muslims believe there are many tests and temptations in life. If a Muslim causes suffering, it is important that they are honest with themselves, with other people and with Allah, and work at repairing the damage they may have caused. This way, relationships can be restored. Muslims believe that God has said that he will forgive anyone who sincerely repents, just as he showed mercy to Adam and Hawwa (Eve) when they were tempted by Iblis (devil) and ate the forbidden fruit in paradise (Jannah)

Quick tip: Free will gives people the chance to choose what they do. There are bad consequences attached to making bad choices. To use free will properly and be rewarded for doing so, Muslims follow God and the Quran.

Religious attitudes to suffering and causing suffering to others (Quick recap)

Religious attitudes to suffering

Christian beliefs	Muslim beliefs
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Whatever the cause, Christians believe they have a duty to help those who are suffering and recognise that good can come from suffering.Paul, who suffered greatly at some point in his life wrote:<div>"We also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character hope." Romans 5:3-4 [NIV]</div>Christians try to follow the example of Jesus. He helped many whom he saw were suffering and told his followers to do the same.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">God allows suffering to happen, often for reasons unknown to people.Suffering may be a test from God. Iblis (Satan) tempts people to cause suffering. God will never allow a person to suffer more than they can endure.<div>"You are sure to be tested through your possessions and persons; you sure to hear much that is hurtful.. If you are steadfast and mindful of God that is the best course." Qur'an 3:186</div>Muslims believe they have a duty to help those who are suffering and recognise that good can come from suffering.

Why does a loving God allow people to suffer?

- It is wrong to blame God for suffering resulting from what are usually human actions.
- God could control people to stop them from doing wrong.
- Instead, Christians and Muslims believe that God gave humans **free will** (the ability to make decisions for themselves) and has given guidance about how to use free will responsibly.
- This does not mean that humans can do whatever they want, whenever they want to do it because this would certainly not prevent suffering. If anything, it would increase.
- The role of the law is to give more guidance about the best way to use free will, together with punishments for those who cause suffering by committing crimes.

Religious attitudes to causing suffering to others

Christian beliefs	Muslim beliefs
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Jesus taught that people should love and respect each other and not use violence in self defence because it may increase suffering.However, this does not always work and on occasions, maybe accidentally, Christians do cause others to suffer.If and when this happens, Christians are taught to apologise and to try to repair the damage they have caused in order to restore relationships E.g. at Jesus' arrest, one disciple cut off the High Priest's servants ear. Jesus rebuked (severe telling off) the disciple and healed the servant.So Christians can try to heal the wrong that has been done and the suffering that has been caused.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Muslims share identity with the whole Muslim community (the Ummah) and care and provide for those in need.Because no human is perfect, on occasions, maybe accidentally, Muslims do cause others to suffer.If and when that happens, Muslims are taught to be honest with themselves and with God and to try to repair the damage they have caused in order to restore relationships.God will forgive any Muslim who tries to right their wrong and sincerely repents, just as he did with Adam and Haawa (Eve) when they were tempted to eat the forbidden fruit by Iblis.

CHRISTIAN ATTITUDES TO FORGIVENESS

Forgiveness

Forgiveness is a core belief in Christianity and one that Jesus emphasised in his teachings. Individual Christians are expected to forgive others, regardless of what they have done, and Christians believe that in turn, God will forgive them. The Lord's Prayer (Our Father who art in heaven...) includes the line

'Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.'
(The Lord's Prayer)

However, many Christians would argue that forgiveness is not a replacement for punishment. It is possible both to forgive somebody who has committed murder and to believe that justice is done when they are sentenced to a long period of imprisonment. However, the intention of the imprisonment should be to reform the murderer so they will not re-offend when released

During his ministry, Jesus was asked by Peter, one of his disciples:

"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)

The Church interprets seventy-seven times as an unlimited amount. Therefore, there is no maximum number of times a person should be forgiven. Christians believe that just as there is no limit on the amount of love that God shows to them and they should show to others, so there can be no limit to forgiveness.

Even as he was being crucified, Jesus said to those crucifying him:

"Father forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."

Christians believe that in their lives, they should follow the example of Jesus, and this includes forgiving those who do wrong things. In Judaism, those who have wronged others should show remorse to their victims and honestly and directly ask for their forgiveness, before they can expect to be forgiven by the victim and by God. Christians don't believe this is a necessary part of forgiveness, but they do believe that forgiveness is easier if the offender shows a serious intention to repent and change their ways so they can start afresh. This is why many Christians believe that reformation should be the primary aim of punishment.

Nobody would pretend that it is easy to forgive people who have wronged you. However people like Maureen Greaves show that it is possible to achieve.

Maureen Greaves

On Christmas Eve 2012, 68-year-old retired social worker Alan Greaves was on his way to St Saviour's Church in Sheffield to play the organ at the Christmas Midnight Mass service. Tragically, two local men made an unprovoked and brutal attack on him and left him for dead. Three days later, Alan died in hospital from his severe head injuries. His wife, family and friends were understandably heartbroken.

As Alan's wife, Maureen, sat at his bedside on Christmas Day she remembers that she started to pray. Her thoughts turned to the person, as then unknown who had attacked Alan

"And I thought Alan would forgive them. It's Christmas Day. I didn't want to carry the anger, all that destructive anger, in my life..."

'I'm not saying I don't want justice for Alan, I did. But I had to carry myself in a way that would help my children. Forgiveness means you are not seeking retribution or vengeance. Forgiveness is recognising that we are in the same boat, we're all the same, not perfect.'

Alan's killers were found guilty and sentenced to lengthy spells in prison.

Exactly one year after Alan's murder, the congregation of St Saviour's met at the spot where he was killed to hold a short ceremony of remembrance and a minute's silence. Maureen asked people to use the time to pray for Alan and his family but also for his killers.

Can forgiveness help to prevent wrongdoing?



In addition to forgiveness being a reaction to wrongdoing, it can also prevent it. North East Prison After Care Society (NEPACS) is a society based on principles of forgiveness and the reformation of prisoners. It was founded by a chaplain at Durham prison and supported by many Christians in the north-east of England either by raising money, volunteering in the prison visitors' centre, or in helping to resettle offenders once they are released.



Maureen with her husband Alan.

MUSLIM ATTITUDES TO FORGIVENESS

Muslim attitudes to Forgiveness

According to Muslims, punishment satisfies the demands of society and especially the person who was wronged. It reinforces the requirements Islam lays down about how to behave in a way that is pleasing to God. Forgiveness serves no part in the punishment process.

However, forgiveness is an important element in Islam. It falls into two categories:

- Forgiveness from God - only God can truly forgive and will only forgive those who are truly sorry and intend to follow the faith properly in the future. This is perfectly in line with the compassionate and merciful nature of God.
- Forgiveness from humans - this is a good way to establish goodness over evil rather than allowing evil to grow. Humans should forgive those who ask for forgiveness and once that has happened, the person who has committed the wrong should then ask for and receive forgiveness from God. If the forgiven act is unknowingly repeated, it should be forgiven again, because there is no limit to God's forgiveness.

"...Let them pardon and forgive. Do you not wish that God should forgive you? God is most forgiving and merciful." (Quran 24:22)

"Pardon each other's faults and God will grant you honour." (Hadith)



Muslim pilgrims gather on Mount Arafat where they will pray for God's forgiveness from dawn to sunset as part of their hajj duties, near Makkah (Mecca), Saudi Arabia.

Forgiving a violent criminal

In April 2014, the mother of a murder victim showed extraordinary forgiveness just as her son's murderer was due to be hanged for the crime.

In 2007, a teenager called Bilal killed another teenager, Abdollah in a street fight in the town of Nour in northern Iran. In line with Shari'ah law, Alinejad, Abdollah's mother was given the opportunity to spare Bilal's life but was determined that he should be executed. Seven years later, and just ten days before the execution was due to take place, Alinejad recounts that she saw her son Abdollah in her dreams, asking her not to take revenge on his killer, but this could not persuade her that forgiveness, and sparing Bilal's life, was the right thing to do.

The night before the execution, Alinejad and her husband found it difficult to sleep because she still couldn't bring herself to forgive. Her husband, advised her to 'look to God and let's see what happens.' Even though her husband could have made the decision to forgive for himself, he promised that his wife should have the final say. He told her 'You've suffered too much, we'll do as you say.'

On the day of the execution, crowds gathered outside the prison gates to witness what happened. Sections of the Quran were read aloud to Bilal before a rope was placed around his neck. He was stood on a chair, blindfolded and with his hands tied behind his back. Shari'ah law allows the victim's heir to personally execute the condemned person as a final act of retribution, in this case by pushing away the chair. Seconds before the execution, he pleaded for his life to be saved. He shouted out 'Please forgive, if only for my mum and dad'. Alinejad shouted back 'How can I forgive, did you show mercy to my son's mum and dad?' Others in the crowd also pleaded for forgiveness.

After approaching Bilal with the intention of pushing away the chair, Alinejad stopped briefly and instead of executing him, slapped him across the face. She later explained: 'After that, I felt rage vanished within my heart. I felt as if the blood in my veins began to flow again. I burst into tears and called my husband and asked him to come up and remove the noose.'

Bilal was pardoned and sentenced to prison. His mother embraced Alinejad and tried to show respect and gratitude by kissing her feet but Alinejad said: 'I didn't allow her to do that, I took her arm and made her stand up... She was just a mother like me, after all.

A week later, Alinejad spoke about her dramatic change of heart: 'Losing a child is like losing a part of your body. All these years, I felt like a moving dead body, but now I feel very calm, I feel I'm at peace. I feel that vengeance has left my heart.'



The moment Samera Alinejad slapped Bilal, just before she removed the noose around his neck, forgiving and sparing the life of her son's convicted murderer.

Religious attitudes to forgiveness

Essential information:

- ❑ Christians and Muslims believe that forgiveness (showing mercy and pardoning someone for what they have done wrong) is important for living a peaceful life.
- ❑ Christians and Muslims do not think forgiveness is a replacement for punishment.

Christian attitudes to forgiveness

The Christian interpretation of forgiveness for those who commit crimes is that they should be forgiven as far as possible, but the offender should be punished to endure that justice is done.

“Father forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.”
Luke 23:34 [NIV]

God expects Christians to show forgiveness to others, no matter what they may have done. In turn, they believe that God will forgive them for any sins they may commit. This is emphasised in the Lords Prayer :

“Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.”
The Lord's Prayer

Jesus also told his followers that there is no upper limit to the use of forgiveness.

“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[NIV]

Muslim attitudes to forgiveness

There are two types of forgiveness in Islam:

Forgiveness from God - Only God can truly forgive and will only forgive those who are truly sorry and intend to follow the faith properly in the future. This is in line with the compassionate and merciful nature of God.

“Let them pardon and forgive. Do you not wish that God should forgive you? God is most forgiving and merciful.”
Qur'an 24:22

Forgiveness from humans - People should forgive each other in order to allow goodness to be established over evil. The offenders should seek the forgiveness of the victim before expecting God to forgive. If the forgiven act is unknowingly repeated, it should be forgiven again

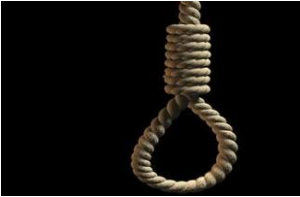
“Pardon each other's faults and [God] will grant you honour” Hadith

RELIGIOUS ATTITUDES TO THE DEATH PENALTY

The death Penalty

The death penalty was abolished in the UK in 1965 as a five-year experiment and permanently abolished in 1969. The European Community has since made it illegal in all member countries. Several campaigns have been carried out in the UK to try to have it reintroduced but all have failed.

Since its abolition, three people executed in the early 1950s have been pardoned because new evidence that emerged since they were put to death which demonstrates that they were innocent. In addition, there have been several instances, since abolition, where people have been shown to have been wrongly convicted of murder and released from prison. If the death penalty was still legal in the UK, it is likely that they would have been executed for crimes they did not commit. Those who are opposed to bringing back the death penalty in the UK argue there is a chance of killing an innocent person.



Hanging as a punishment in the UK was abolished in 1965.



Timothy Evans in 1950 was wrongly convicted and later hanged in Britain for the murder of his wife.

Supporters of the death sentence believe it is justifiable retribution for serious crimes, such as murder. In addition to being seen as retribution, some people claim that the death penalty deters people from committing murder. However, there is little evidence to support the view that the death penalty does deter people from committing serious crimes. Countries such as the UK that do not permit the death penalty do not have higher murder rates than those that do allow it. Most people who commit murder do not think about what happens to them, although they may consider it afterwards. It is possible that they do not expect to be caught anyway and in some cases they may be so angry that they do not care.

The philosophical **principle of utility** suggests that an action is right if it promotes maximum happiness for the maximum number of people affected by it. It would appear that on this basis, the death penalty should be allowed. However the principle of utility does not support the death penalty on grounds of retribution (getting even). It only allows it if the protection of wider society can be proven.

The **Sanctity of life** is a teaching that God gave life and only he has the right to take it away. In relation to the death penalty, it appears to suggest that as executing an offender is denying God's right to take away the offender's

life, it is wrong. However, some argue that as the death penalty is usually reserved for murderers who have already taken away life, they are being punished in a way that they deserve and one in which God approves of.

Christian attitudes to the death penalty.

Individual Christians may have different beliefs about whether the death penalty should or should not be allowed. Those who agree with the death penalty tend to use teachings from the Old Testament to support their views. Their main justification is taken from *Genesis*:

"Whoever sheds human blood, by humans shall their blood be shed."
(Genesis 9:6)

They often support this by making reference to the teachings in *Exodus*:

"Life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth." (Exodus 21:23-24)

However, Christians who oppose the death penalty do so mainly because they do not believe that taking another life is right. They believe that only God has the right to take life - after all, it is he who gifted life to humanity. Jesus taught about the importance of forgiveness and warned people not to judge each other harshly. In the sixth century BC, speaking on behalf of God, the prophet Ezekiel said:

"I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn away from their ways and live."
(Ezekiel 33:11)

Some people would argue that the death penalty also protects society by ensuring that a violent criminal does not kill again. While it can be argued that the rest of society is protected if murderers are executed, protection is achieved by imprisoning murderers. Imprisonment also gives murderers the chance to repent and be reformed so that, when released, they can be useful members of society. This is what many Christians want to happen and why they oppose the death sentence.

In September 2015, when addressing the US congress, Pope Francis said:

"The conviction (that human life and dignity should be protected) has led me, from the beginning of my ministry, to advocate at different levels for the global abolition of the death penalty. I am convinced that this way is the best, since every life is sacred, every human person is endowed with an inalienable dignity, and society can only benefit from the rehabilitation of those convicted of crimes."
(Pope Francis)

Key terms:

Death penalty: capital punishment; a form of punishment in which a prisoner is put to death for their crimes.

Principle of utility: a philosophical idea that an action is right if it promotes maximum happiness for the maximum number of people

Sanctity of life: idea that all life is holy as it is created by God; human life should not be misused or abused



Pope Francis addresses the US congress on 24th September 2015.

RELIGIOUS ATTITUDES TO THE DEATH PENALTY

Muslim attitudes to the death penalty

Shari'ah Law

In some Muslim-majority countries where they follow Shari'ah law, the death penalty is used as a deterrent for a series of offences. Those found guilty of murder are likely to be sentenced to die. However, the victim or their family are encouraged to show mercy, which is greatly valued, by accepting compensation (blood money) from the offender to reduce the penalty from death to imprisonment and even on occasions being set free. If the family does not show mercy the offender will be executed. The Quran can be interpreted to justify the death penalty and also the acceptance of compensation:

"...Do not take life, which God has made sacred, except by right. This is what He commands you to do: so that you may use your reason." (Quran 6:151)

"But if the culprit is pardoned by his aggrieved brother, this shall be adhered to fairly, and the culprit shall pay what is due in a good way. This is an alleviation from your Lord and an act of mercy." (Quran 2:178)

In Shari'ah law, in addition to murder, the death penalty might be used (though not in all cases) for: treason/apostasy (when one leaves the faith and turns against it); terrorism; piracy (that which involves hijacking, armed robbery and/or killing); rape; adultery; homosexual activity.

The death penalty for these crimes may be implemented according to a particular state's interpretation of Shari'ah law, which varies from country to country. In countries that operate under Shari'ah law, methods of execution vary and can include beheading, firing squad, hanging and stoning.



Human rights protesters opposing the death penalty in Pakistan.

In a Shari'ah court there must be very strict evidence standards that need to be met before a conviction is made. The death penalty is not generally compulsory, and the court can decide to order less than the ultimate punishment (for example, imposing fines or prison sentences), on a case by case basis. The death sentence is usually carried out in public in order to deter other from committing offences. However, in accordance with the teachings of the Quran, it is preferable to forgive, and pardon the accused, and this can even happen on the day of the execution itself (as was the case with Samera Alinejad forgiving the killer of her son at the last minute).

Muslim opposition to the death penalty

Although capital punishment is still widely supported in Islamic states and nations in which Islam is the state religion, there are some groups of Muslims who do not agree with the use of the death penalty, and believe the passages supporting the death penalty in the Quran have been misinterpreted. The Muslim Peace fellowship is a Muslim organisation specifically devoted to the theory and practice of Islamic nonviolence. The founder, Rabia Terri Harris has spoken out publically against the death penalty.



Rabia Terri Harris has spoken out publically against the death penalty.



Application of Knowledge

Read the information and then complete the following activities below:

1. Explain the legal situation regarding the death penalty in the UK.
2. For what reasons do you think people might be in favour of the death penalty?
3. Do you think Christians should be in favour of the death penalty? Give religious reasons for both sides of the argument.
4. Explain the Muslim attitudes towards the death penalty.
5. Explain how accepting compensation or blood money might help the family of a murder victim to show mercy. Do you think it may be the right thing to do?

Arguments to support the death penalty

- Retribution - Terrorists and murderers deserve to die. A life for a life.
- Deterrence - Deters people from committing horrendous crimes as they know if they are caught they will die.
- Protection- The public needs protecting.
- A so called life sentence is not punishment enough. Those given life are often released after 15 yrs.
- Revenge is a natural human emotion.
- Money - It costs thousand to keep murderers in prison.

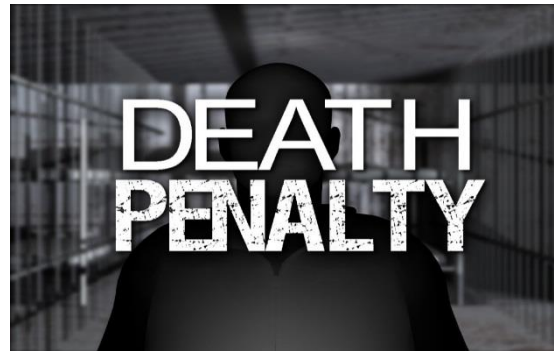
Religious arguments in support of the death penalty

Some Christians might support the death penalty.

- Those Christians who agree with the death penalty tend to use teachings from the Old Testament to support their views. Their main justification is taken from book of Genesis: "Whoever sheds human blood, by humans shall their blood be shed." (Genesis 9:6)
- They often support this by making reference to the teachings in Exodus: "Life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth." (Exodus 21:23-24)

KEY WORDS:

Capital Punishment Justice Retribution Deterrence Reform God
Protection Revenge Sanctity of Life



RESPONSE TEMPLATE:

Some people may agree with the statement because.....
For example.....

However others may disagree with the statement because.....
For example.....

Personally I think.....

Possible 12 mark evaluation Question

'The death sentence is never a suitable punishment'.

Do you agree? Give reasons showing that you have considered more than one point of view. Refer to religion in your response.

Argument against the death penalty

- Mistakes - Innocent people have been killed. Protection - Putting a murderer in prison protects society.
- Deterrence - There is no evidence that the death penalty is a better deterrent than life in prison.
- Reform - Reformed criminals can be a big influence for good.
- The law condemns murder and then goes on to murder in the name of the law.
- Right - All life is sacred - Only God has the right to end a person's life.

Religious arguments against the death penalty

Many Christians are against the death penalty.

- Many Christians do not believe that taking another life is right. They believe that only God has the right to take life - after all, it is he who gifted life to humanity.
- Jesus taught about the importance of forgiveness and warned people not to judge each other harshly.
- Prison gives murderers the chance to repent and be reformed so that, when released, they can be useful members of society. Many Christians support this and oppose the death sentence.