

RELATIONSHIPS AND FAMILY



INFORMATION BOOKLET

Relationships and families - Christian and Muslim teachings about human sexuality

Human sexuality: heterosexual and homosexual relationships

Human sexuality refers to the way people express themselves as sexual beings. People begin to have sexual feelings at puberty. This is a natural part of human biology that usually leads to intercourse with the opposite sex and reproduction (having children).

A heterosexual relationship is a sexual relationship with a member of the opposite sex: that is, between a man and a woman. A homosexual relationship is a sexual relationship with a member of the same sex, either between a man and another man or a woman and another woman.

Contemporary British attitudes

Since sexuality is such a powerful human force that it can result in a new life, the Christian Church teaches that the only valid place for a sexual relationship is within marriage. In the past, the church was more powerful and the majority of society accepted this viewpoint. However, times have since changed (See paragraph 3).

Islam also teaches that the only valid place for a sexual relationship is within marriage. In Britain some Muslims may take issue with the kind of freedom with which many people in contemporary Britain carry out sexual relationships. However they also accept that in British society individuals have the right to make their own choices.

Today in Britain, contraception and legal abortion have reduced the fear of pregnancy. Sex before marriage, multiple sexual partners, children outside marriage, affairs (adultery), or open homosexual relationships are far more common. In Britain, homosexuality is legal and homosexual couples can now marry or convert civil partnerships into marriage if they wish. These changes to the law broadly reflect contemporary British attitudes to sexuality.

Timeline of the law in Britain for homosexual relationships

1885	Sexual acts between homosexuals are made illegal.
1967	Homosexual acts declared legal for people over 21, except in the armed forces.
1994	Age of consent for homosexual acts is reduced to 18.
2000	Homosexuals are allowed to serve in the armed forces.
2001	Age of consent for homosexual acts is reduced to 16
2004	Civil partnerships are recognised in law
2013	Same-sex marriage is recognised in law.



For Christians, heterosexual relationships are part of God's plan.



In Islam sexuality is accepted as part of life, but sex should only occur within marriage.

Christians in Britain do not all agree about homosexuality. Some believe that such relationships cannot produce children and are therefore not what God intended but others accept homosexual relationships that are loving and committed.

While homosexuality remains forbidden in Islam, there is a debate among the British Muslim population around homosexuality. In 2006 a survey showed that approximately half of British Muslims do not approve of homosexuality. However in Britain there are some organisations run by Muslims, such as the Inclusive Mosque Initiative, that believe homosexuality should be accepted in Islam. While many British Muslims may not approve of homosexuality, they do accept that homosexuality is a part of British society. Another survey of British Muslims in 2011 conducted by the think tank Demos suggested that fewer than 25 per cent of British Muslims take issue with Britain's attitude to homosexuality.

The age of consent

In the UK, 'the age of consent' for anyone to have sex is 16 years old, which means you are legally old enough to freely agree to have sex. The law tries to protect anyone under 16 from exploitation and abuse. Children under 13 are protected by additional specific laws to prevent abuse. Some people think that as long as people freely consent and are over 16, any kind of sexual behaviour is acceptable. But most people, whether religious or non-religious, would consider infidelity (unfaithfulness) to be wrong

Islamic teachings do not specify an age of consent. Sex should only occur within marriage and dating is not encouraged except within strictly controlled circumstances, and never involving sexual relations. Some Muslim parents may arrange for their children to be married, but this is done only when they agree and are ready to enter such a commitment. It is a teaching of Islam that this should conform to the laws of the country in which they live.

Christian and Muslim attitudes towards human sexuality

Many Christians see heterosexual relationships as part of God's plan for humans. Genesis says that a man and woman should be united together and 'increase in number' (Genesis 1:28 and 2:24). This is why many Christians are opposed to sex outside marriage, and some are strongly against homosexual relationships and artificial contraception. Other Christians believe that the most loving thing to do would be to adapt their teachings to fit a changing world

Key terms:

- Human sexuality: how people express themselves as sexual beings.
- Heterosexual: to be sexually attracted to members of the opposite sex.
- Homosexual: to be sexually attracted to members of the same sex.



Same-sex relationships are forbidden in Islam, but there are some publicly gay Muslims, such as Ludovic-Mohamed Zahed (right), who campaign for homosexuality to be accepted by Muslims.

"Do not have sexual relations with a man as one does with a woman; that is detestable."
(Leviticus 18:22)

Relationships and families – Christian and Muslim teachings about human sexuality continued

Christians, like many other people, have different opinions about homosexuality. Those who oppose it may base their views on Leviticus 18:22 and 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, where it is written that sexual relationships between two men are forbidden. The precise meaning of these passages is contested among Christians.

The Bible includes no specific detail regarding homosexual relationships between women, and there is nothing in the Bible that prohibits homosexual relationships that do not involve penetrative sex. The Catholic Church teaches that homosexual people are not sinful because of their homosexuality, but that they should remain chaste (not have sex) to avoid sinful acts. The Church of England welcomes homosexual Christians who live in a faithful, committed relationship, but it does not allow them to marry in church. Some Christians think Bible texts need to be interpreted in the context of modern society, and therefore consider loving, faithful homosexual relationships to be just as holy as heterosexual relationships.

Muslims believe that sexuality is part of being human, not wrong or unhealthy. They agree that sex is for pleasure, not just reproduction, and that human beings have natural sexual instincts that should be nurtured and not suppressed. The human body was created by God and all parts have a useful purpose. Islam teaches that celibacy (choosing not to marry and have sexual relations) is wrong.

Islam also teaches that sexuality must be used in a responsible way and, like many other religions, there are certain rules and expectations surrounding sex. For Muslims, heterosexual relationships between men and women are the normal pattern of behaviour. It is expected that Muslims will marry and have a family. The sexual relationship between a husband and wife is considered a blessing from God. This is the only permitted form of sexual relationship in Islam.

In most Muslim countries homosexuality is against the law, as it was in Britain until 1967. In Islam, sexual orientation is considered a human choice. However, most Muslims believe that just because some people are drawn to forming homosexual relationships it does not make it right. Islam considers same-sex relationships to be against the natural law created by God.

The majority of Muslims believe that the Qur'an and Hadith teach that homosexuality is against God's will and that homosexuals should control their actions and not break God's law. The punishment for engaging in homosexual acts is sometimes severe in Muslim majority countries. To be convicted, a person must confess, or there must be four eyewitnesses to the act. This means that a person who commits homosexual acts may not be punished on earth, but some Muslims believe that person will have to answer to God on the Day of Judgement.

The prophet Lut (Lot) spoke God's words:

"Must you, unlike (other) people, lust after males and abandon the wives that God has created for you? You are exceeding all bounds." (Qur'an 26:165-166)



Summary of religious views on homosexuality

Christians do not all agree about homosexuality. Some believe that such relationship cannot produce children and are therefore not what God intended but others accept homosexual relationships that are loving and committed. In Islam the majority of Muslims consider all homosexual relationships to be against God's natural law.

Look at the information sheet and then complete the following in your book.



1. Explain why some Christians approve of heterosexual relationships over homosexual relationships. Use Christian teachings in your answer.
2. 'Christian beliefs about sex have led to prejudice against homosexual people'. How far do you agree with this statement?
3. Explain Muslim attitudes towards human sexuality.
4. Explain two reasons why Islam considers homosexual relationships to be wrong.
5. 'There is too much sexual freedom in contemporary British society.' Evaluate this statement. (12 marks)

Summary: You should now be able to explain Christian, Muslim and non-religious attitudes to human sexuality, including heterosexual and homosexual relationships.

Sexual relationships before and outside marriage.

Sexual relationships before marriage

Many Christians believe that sex expresses a deep, loving, lifelong union that first requires the commitment of marriage. They believe it is important to be sexually pure (chaste) before marriage because having sex is part of the loving, trusting relationship that should be developed within a marriage; it should not just be a casual, temporary pleasure. Christians believe it is wrong to use people for sex, and irresponsible to spread sexually transmitted infections or risk pregnancy. In the Bible, Paul urged sexual restraint:

"Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body. Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God. You are not your own." (1 Corinthians 6: 18-19)

Although the Anglican and Catholic churches teach that unmarried people should not have sex, some Christians accept that for some people sex before marriage is a valid expression of their love for each other. This more liberal Christian attitude provides a contrast to some other religions, such as Islam, that teaches that sex before marriage is wrong.

Muslims believe sex to be a gift from God. In Islam it is recognised as a strong instinct that needs to be treated carefully and managed responsibly. In his introduction to Islam, Abdul Wahid Hamid wrote:

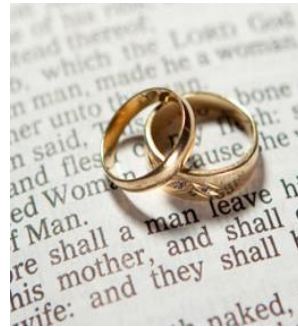
"The only way to protect all within society is to maintain a society where only a man and his wife share the act of sex." (Abdul Wahid Hamid, Islam: The Natural Way)

Muslims believe that casual sex is wrong and detracts from the dignity of those involved. Sexual responsibility involves moral considerations, for example it should not cause harm. Children have a right to be born into a loving family, and to know their father and mother. Muslims believe that casual sex can lead to promiscuity and other evils such as rape and deception.

The Qur'an expressly forbids sex before marriage. Under Islamic law (Shari'ah) sex before marriage is considered, like adultery and rape, to be zinah (a sexual offense).

Sexual relationships outside marriage

All religions place a high value on faithfulness in marriage. Adultery means having a sexual relationship with someone who is not your spouse (husband or wife). Many non-religious people agree with religions that sex outside marriage is wrong because it involves secrecy, lies, and a betrayal of trust. It can affect children and cause pain to all concerned.



Christians believe that the commitment of marriage is important for a sexual relationship.

Adultery breaks the promises Christian couples make before God during their wedding, to forsake all others and be faithful to each other as long as they both shall live. It threatens the stable relationship needed between parents for their children's security. The Bible commandment is clear:

"You shall not commit adultery." (Exodus 20:14)

Jesus taught that lust, which could lead to adultery, is also wrong:

"You have heard it said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart." (Matthew 5:27-8)

Jesus forgave a woman who was caught in adultery, but ordered her to 'go now and leave your life of sin.' (John 8: 1-11). For Christians, marriage is an unbreakable bond that demands total faithfulness.



Sex outside marriage (adultery) can cause a lot of unhappiness in a marriage and lead to divorce.



In Islam, a sexual relationship within a marriage is considered a blessing.

Like all religions, Islam teaches faithfulness in marriage. Adultery or sex outside marriage is considered a serious sin. Muslims should avoid situations that could lead to sexual sins.

"A man should not stay with a woman in seclusion unless he is a Dhu-Mahram (relative)." (Hadith)

When a married person has sex with someone who is not their spouse, it often destroys a marriage because it is a betrayal of trust and goes against the promises made by the couple on their wedding day.

The Qur'an expressly forbids adultery:

"And do not go anywhere near adultery: it is an outrage, and an evil path." (Qur'an 17:32)

In some Muslim countries under Shari'ah law, the punishment for an adultery conviction is death by stoning. The punishment is more severe than for sex before marriage because married couples should not need to go outside of their marriage to find fulfilment. However, just as for homosexual relationships, all convictions under the law, for both sex before marriage and adultery, require either a confession, or four separate eyewitness accounts of the act. It is therefore very difficult, and rare, for such a conviction to be reached.

Key terms:

Sex before marriage:

Sex between two single unmarried people.

adultery: Voluntary sexual intercourse between a married person and someone who is not their spouse (husband or wife).

Sex outside marriage:

Sex between two people where one or both of them is married to someone else; adultery; having an affair.

Changing British attitudes

Sex before marriage

In the past sex before marriage was considered shocking, particularly for a woman. This is still true in many cultures around the world, where a woman who has sex before marriage may be asked to leave her home for bringing disgrace to her family. In the last 50 years or so attitudes have changed in British society. Sex before marriage is now widely accepted. Many magazines, films and television programmes reflect the common belief that it is usual for couples who are dating to have sex. Sometimes young people can feel pressure from their peers to have sexual experiences before marriage, and it is commonly argued that couples should see whether they are sexually compatible before they marry. **For young British Muslims this can mean that they feel caught between the values of their religion and the values of the culture in which they live.**

Sex outside marriage

Adultery is also often represented in the media and popular culture. But many people, both religious and non-religious, would regard unfaithfulness in marriage as wrong. The lies and deception that adultery brings to a relationship often lead to divorce. **The great majority of British Muslims would consider all forms of sex outside marriage to be wrong.**

According to a survey of British attitudes conducted in 2009:

- 82 per cent of non-religious Britons said sex before marriage is morally acceptable, compared with only 3 per cent of British Muslims.
- 15 per cent of non-religious Britons thought married people having an affair is morally acceptable, compared with only 2 per cent of British Muslims.



Look at the information and then complete the following knowledge based exam questions in your book.

1. Explain two contrasting religious beliefs about sex before marriage.
In your answer you must refer to one or more religious traditions (4 Marks)
2. Explain two religious beliefs about adultery.
Refer to sacred writings or another source of religious belief and teaching in your answer.
(5 marks)

Evaluation exam question practice:

'All sex before marriage is wrong'.
Evaluate this statement. (12 marks)

Evaluate this statement. In your answer you should:

- Refer to religious teaching
- Give developed arguments to support this statement
- Give developed arguments to support a different point of view
- Reach a justified conclusion.



Summary: You should now be able to explain Christian, Muslim and non-religious attitudes towards sex before marriage and sex outside marriage.

CONTRACEPTION AND FAMILY PLANNING

What is contraception?

Contraception is a way of preventing pregnancy when a couple have sex. There are three main forms: artificial, natural and permanent.

There are many different types of artificial contraception, some of which include:

- The pill, or injection, which contain a hormone that stops the woman from producing an egg.
- The diaphragm, or condom, which stops the sperm meeting the egg - the condom also prevents the spread of sexually transmitted infections.
- Spermicidal jellies or creams, which kill the sperm directly.
- The coil (intrauterine device) and the morning after pill, which stop a fertilised egg from implanting in the womb - some people consider these methods a form of abortion.



There are many different forms of contraception.

Natural methods involve only having sex at certain times of the month in order to reduce the chance of pregnancy. For example, with the rhythm method, the woman records the length of her menstrual cycles in order to determine when she should avoid having sex.

Sterilisation (a surgical operation) of either the man or the woman, which is a permanent way of preventing pregnancy.

Contemporary British attitudes

In modern Britain there is widespread acceptance of the use of contraception in family planning. Many people think it is more responsible to prevent unwanted pregnancies, both from a personal point of view and also because of concerns about global over-population. Many religious people think that using some forms of contraception for the right reasons within marriage is acceptable. Some believers, such as Catholic and Orthodox Christians, oppose artificial methods but accept natural ones; other believers agree with Muslims that methods that cause abortion are wrong. British Muslims would generally agree that contraception, used for the right reasons within marriage, is acceptable.

Christian attitudes towards contraception and family planning

Christian attitudes vary towards different methods of contraception depending on how they work. All Christian churches agree that having children is God's greatest gift to a married couple. Christian couples are called by God to be responsible parents, fully committed to their children's nurture and guidance. It is God's will that children are born within marriage, but all Christian churches accept that there are some situations when it may be acceptable to avoid bringing children into the world. The reasons may be economic, environmental, physical or psychological.

However, Christian churches do not all agree on the methods couples should use to limit their families or to time the births of their children. The Catholic and Orthodox Churches teach that artificial contraception goes against natural law (the moral principles that are part of human nature). God's purpose for marriage is to have a family. The Catholic church believes that sex is for making new life as well as expressing love and that these two purposes should not be separated.

The Catholic church teaches that using artificial contraception is sinful because the couple are not being open to new life and so are preventing God's plan. Its use could encourage selfishness or infidelity. The Catholic Church is not against family planning, but thinks that parents should use the rhythm method to space the births of their children. Many people disagree with this teaching because they think natural methods can be less reliable and they see no reason not to use methods developed by medical science, as long as these do not cause an abortion. Furthermore, the population explosion and spread of AIDS presents new challenges to this teaching.

Many other Christians, will naturally want to have a family, but they do not want every sexual act to potentially lead to conceiving a child. Anglicans and Nonconformist Christians accept that people should only have as many children as they are able to care for. It would be unfair to bring a baby into a life of deprivation. They allow contraception to enable couples to develop their relationship before having children, or to space out pregnancies to avoid harming the mother's health. The Church of England approved the use of artificial contraception in 1930:

"The Conference agrees that other methods may be used, provided that this is done in the light of Christian principles." (Lambeth Conference, 1930)

Many Christians do agree that some forms of contraception should not be used because the egg may already be fertilised and therefore conception has taken place. The coil and the morning after pill prevent the egg from developing, which some people see as causing an abortion. Christians, and many other religious people who believe in the protection of human life from the moment of conception are opposed to these methods.

Key terms:

Contraception: the methods used to prevent a pregnancy taking place

Family planning: controlling how many children couples have and when they have them.

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

Humanae Vitae 1968



Catholics for Choice is a Catholic organisation that in 2013 ran a controversial 'condoms4life' campaign in Kenya, supporting the use of condoms to prevent the spread of HIV.

CONTRACEPTION AND FAMILY PLANNING CONTINUED



Muslim attitudes towards contraception and family planning

For Muslims, contraception is only considered in the context of marriage, and not for unmarried people. Children are considered a gift from God. There is an expectation that Muslim couples will have children, although most Muslims accept that the couple should be able to decide when to start a family and also how many children to have, depending on their personal circumstances.

For Muslims, children are a gift from God.

Most Muslims accept the use of contraception for family planning as long as it is not used to prevent having children altogether. Some

Muslims may prefer natural methods of contraception, but they accept artificial methods if a wife's health is at risk, to help space out pregnancies, or to avoid serious financial difficulty. Generally any method to stop conception is considered fine unless it is damaging to health.

The Qur'an contains no direct teaching about contraception, but some scholars use the following text to argue that Islam does not want to impose hardship on people and so would be sympathetic to family planning:

"God wishes to lighten your burden; man was created weak." (Qur'an 4:28)

Evidence from some Hadith shows that Muhammad knew of birth control and seemed to approve of it in appropriate circumstances. Avicenna, a Muslim doctor in the 11th century, listed 20 different substances used for birth control. The most common method was withdrawal, which is still approved of in Islam, although now many Muslims say that the wife's consent is required.

There are some Muslims who think contraception is wrong, that it interferes with God's plans, and that God gives people the strength and means to cope with any children. This is not an official teaching of Islam, however some Muslims quote the following passage from the Qur'an, which is against infanticide (killing infants after they are born), and argue that it also applies to contraception:

"Do not kill your children for fear of poverty - we shall provide for them and for you - killing them is a great sin." (Qur'an 17:31)

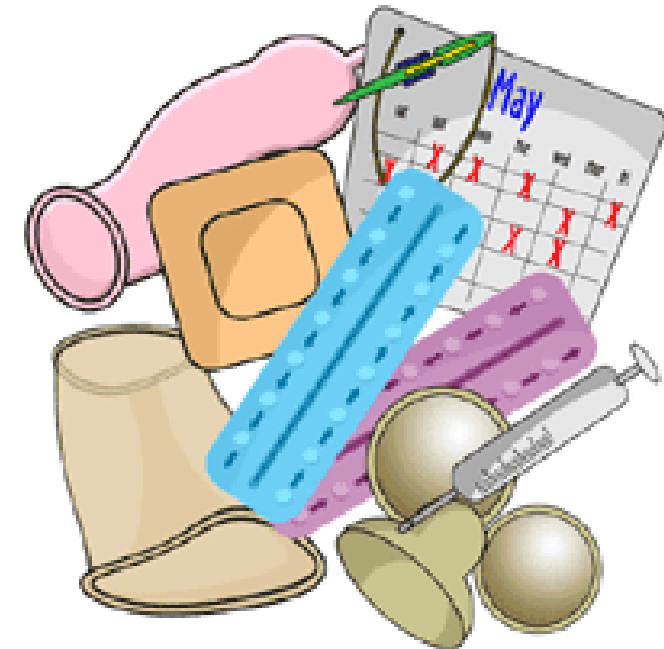


Contraception may be necessary for health reasons.

Read the information sheet and then complete the following activities below



1. Why might a married couple want to prevent the conception of a child?
2. Explain why some Christians are against the use of artificial methods of contraception.
3. 'The Christian Church should not take a view on family planning.' What do you think about this statement? Give arguments for and against and explain your answer. (12 marks)
4. Explain two reasons why some Muslim couples might wish to plan their families.
5. Why do Muslims usually oppose sterilisation?
6. Explain two contrasting Muslim attitudes about the use of contraception within marriage.



RELIGIOUS ATTITUDES ABOUT MARRIAGE

Marriage

People marry to share their lives with the person they love. Marriage is a legal contract that brings security as it protects the rights of each partner, provides various legal and financial benefits, and is a serious, lifelong public commitment.

The nature of marriage has recently been keenly debated in the UK. Marriage used to be defined as the legal union of a man and a woman. In 2004, same sex couples were allowed to register their union in a civil partnership that gave them the same legal rights as married couples. But many same sex couples felt that having separate civil partnerships seemed to imply that homosexual relationships were not as valid as heterosexual ones. Same-sex marriages became legal in England, Wales and Scotland in 2014, and in Ireland in 2015.

Many Christians opposed this, not because they were against equal rights, but because it seemed to be changing the nature of marriage. Marriage was being redefined to mean simply a committed relationship between two adults, whereas many Christians consider it to be a unique relationship between a man and a woman that involves their ability to create new life in the form of children. The law does protect churches that oppose homosexual marriage and they are not forced to conduct same sex marriages against their beliefs. Islam forbids homosexual relationships, therefore many Muslims were also opposed to this change in law.

The number of couples who marry is declining. This may be due to the fact that some couples choose to live together rather than getting married. This is called cohabitation.

The nature and purpose of marriage

Marriage was one of God's gifts at creation. It is natural for a man and woman to leave their parents and become 'one flesh' through which they bring new life into the world.



A Christian wedding in church

*"That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh."
(Genesis 2:24)*

Some Christians believe that marriage is a sacrament, a lifelong union blessed by God, that reflects the sacrificial love of Jesus, and a covenant (agreement) before God in which the couple promises to live faithfully together until death.

The couple's physical intimacy expresses their love. They share companionship through good times and bad, and try to bring up their children in the way that God wants. Marriage is a spiritual bond of trust that reflects the love of God. The couple should love each other 'as Christ loved the church' (Ephesians 5:25)

*"The Church sees marriage between a man and a woman, as central to the stability and health of human society."
(House of Bishops of the General Synod of the Church of England)*

For Christians, the purpose of marriage is to provide a stable, secure environment for family life. It is the proper place to enjoy a sexual relationship, bring up children within a religious faith and provide lifelong support and companionship for a partner.

The nature and purpose of marriage within Christianity is emphasised further in the wedding vows, words each partner says as a way of showing their commitment to each other.

*"I, N, take you, N,
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,
till death us do part;
according to God's holy law.
In the presence of God I make
this vow."
(The marriage vows from an
Anglican wedding service.)*

Muslims consider marriage to be the foundation for family life. According to teachings from hadith, Islam teaches that a man completes half his religious responsibilities when he marries. For Muslims, marriage is:

- A faithful, lifelong partnership where both people take full responsibility for their children.
- A social contract that brings together two families and has a big impact on the whole community.
- The best way for people to have a stable relationship and true sexual fulfilment.

The Qur'an and a number of hadith make it clear that marriage was intended by God for the sharing of love and companionship. Love will develop within the marriage, but not necessarily before it. Husband and wife keep their own rights as equals within the partnership under God. The Qur'an teaches that husbands and wives are like garments for each other (Qur'an 2: 187). Each should support and care for the other.

*"there is no institution in Islam more beloved and dearer to God than marriage."
(Hadith)*

Adults are expected to marry because it is considered to be a normal part of life. They are urged not to let poverty stand in the way of marriage (Qur'an 24:32). Marriage helps people to develop spirituality

Key terms:

Marriage: a legal union between a man and a woman (or in some countries, including the UK, two people of the same sex) as partners in a relationship.

Civil partnership: legal union of same-sex couples.

Same-sex marriage: marriage between partners of the same sex.

Cohabitation: a couple living together and having a sexual relationship without being married to one another.



A Muslim bride and groom

RELIGIOUS ATTITUDES ABOUT MARRIAGE CONTINUED

because it prevents them from sinning (by controlling sexuality) and adds value to their acts of worship.

In Islam a couple may have an arranged marriage or a love marriage. Some Muslim parents arrange or assist the marriage of their son or daughter by finding a suitable partner. Parents know their children well and look for someone of good character, similar background and education, and the same religion. A Muslim woman must marry a Muslim. A Muslim man can marry a Muslim, Christian or Jew. According to Islamic teaching, no one is forced to marry – sons and daughters have the right to object to an arranged marriage. In the case of a love marriage, where the couple choose to marry each other, the couple have a duty to request approval from their parents. Muslims can choose to marry who they like.

"If a man gives his daughter in marriage while she is averse to it then such marriage is invalid."
(Hadith)

Attitudes towards Cohabitation

Sometimes the cost of marriage prevents people from marrying immediately. In Britain today, many couples live together without being married. This is called cohabitation. Some want to see if their relationship is going to work, and then may decide to marry if they starting a family. Others never marry, but live and raise their children together in a loving partnership. Same-sex couples may cohabit until they decide to seek a civil partnership or to get married.

Christians who are opposed to sex before marriage believe cohabitation is sinful. The Orthodox Church, for example, is opposed to any recognition of a sexual relationship outside a Christian marriage. The Catholic Church agrees:

"The sexual act must take place exclusively within marriage. Outside of marriage it always constitutes a grave sin."
(Catholic Catechism 2390)

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

Muslims are against cohabitation because they believe a sexual relationship should only occur within marriage.

"I think if a couple love each other then marriage is the key. It is the only appropriate setting for sexual relationships and having children."
(Musa – A young Muslim)

Read the information sheet and then complete the following activities below:
(Most of these questions are aimed at helping you understand religious beliefs/teachings and being able to explain them clearly)

1. Explain two reasons why people might live together rather than marry.
2. What is the key purpose of marriage for Christians?
3. Explain Muslim beliefs about the nature and purpose of marriage.
4. Why do some Christians and Muslims oppose same-sex marriage?
5. Explain Christian and Muslim views on cohabitation.
6. **Personal reflection:** 'People should always marry someone of the same religion.' What do you think?



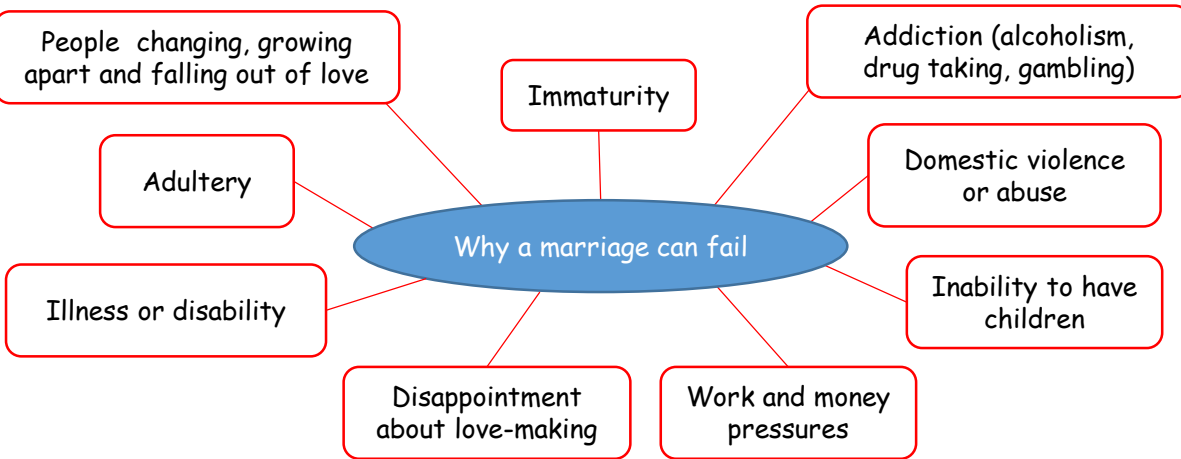
Same-sex marriages have been legal in England, Wales and Scotland since 2014. They have been legal in Ireland since 2015.

RELIGIOUS ATTITUDES ABOUT DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE

Divorce in Britain

Divorce is the legal ending of a marriage. In England and Wales in 2012 an estimated 42 per cent of all marriages ended in divorce. Divorce is allowed after one year of marriage if the marriage cannot be saved. A legally recognised civil divorce must be obtained through a court. If both partners are in agreement a divorce can be granted in as little as six weeks. Remarriage is allowed as many times as people wish, to a different partner or to their original spouse (although remarriage is not always allowed in the church, as you will see later).

Reasons for Divorce



When couples stop communicating with each other, it can lead to resentment, arguments and instability for children in the family. The examples of why a marriage fails, shown above, can for some couples put a real strain on their marriage and can cause the complete breakdown of a relationship.

Religious and non-religious attitudes to divorce

All religions believe marriage is for life, but they recognise that some marriages break down. Religious believers try to balance ethical arguments between the sanctity of their marriage vows and compassion for people whose marriage has broken down. While many would say that promises made before God are sacred and should never be broken, others may believe that there may be circumstances when it is more compassionate and loving to allow divorce, for example in cases of domestic violence that risk the health and safety of a partner or their children. All religions try to help couples having problems, perhaps by offering counselling, prayer, mediation and the support of the community.

Most non-religious people accept divorce and remarriage from a practical point of view. They might take a utilitarian position, that if divorce causes the least harm in the situation, then it is

morally right. Atheists and humanists do not believe that marriage promises are made before God so it is up to the couple to decide on the future of their relationship. The main priority for religious and non-religious people is the well-being of any children involved.

Christian teachings about divorce and remarriage

In the Bible, Jesus taught that anyone who divorced and remarried was committing adultery:

"He answered, 'Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her. And if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery.'" (Mark 10: 11-12)

It is worth noting that Matthew 5:32 adds *'If a man divorces his wife for any cause other than unchastity (unfaithfulness) he involves her in adultery.'*

The Church helps divorced people but must also keep marriage sacred. Christians believe that vows made in God's presence should be kept.

The catholic Church teaches that a civil divorce cannot dissolve a marriage between two baptised people. Catholics can separate but they cannot marry someone else in a Catholic church while their partner is still alive. For Catholics, marriage is a sacrament that is permanent, exclusive and lifelong, and the couple make vows before God that can never be broken. However Catholics can obtain an annulment under certain circumstances if it was never a true marriage. Catholics whose marriage has been annulled are free to marry in church.

Other Christians think that although marriage is for life, sometimes divorce is the lesser of two evils. Divorced Anglicans can marry someone else in church with the bishop's permission, as long as the priest in that church is willing to perform the marriage ceremony. Priests who are uncomfortable with this may instead offer a blessing after a civil ceremony.

Other Protestant churches, for example the Methodist or United Reformed Church, accept civil divorce and allow remarriage in church as long as the couple take the vows seriously. They think that the Church should reflect the forgiveness of god and allow people who have made mistakes the opportunity to find happiness in a second marriage.

The Eastern Orthodox Church grants divorce and remarries couples, but usually no more than twice.

Key terms:

Divorce: legal ending of a marriage.

Remarriage: when someone marries again while their former spouse (husband or wife) is still alive.

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



The Church supports couples who wish to reconcile their differences.

Christian responses to couples who are having problems in their marriage

Christian clergy offer support to couples who are having problems in their marriage, through counselling, prayer and the sacraments. They may refer couples to outside agencies, such as Relate and Accord, that provide counselling and advice. They believe that Christians should try to bring forgiveness and reconciliation back to marriages that have broken down. Often other Christians in the local church or community will support the couple through a difficult time.

Muslim teachings about divorce and remarriage

Muslims allow divorce as a last resort, but it is believed to be hateful to God (Hadith). The Qur'an guarantees the rights of both men and women to divorce. Muhammad himself married a divorced woman. Remarriage is allowed in Islam, although some do frown on it, as they feel every effort should be made to make the original marriage work.

For a religious divorce, a man must declare it to his wife verbally or in writing. The couple must wait three months (iddah) without having sex but remain living together. This allows time to reconsider and to see if the wife is pregnant. If she is pregnant, the couple must wait until the baby is born before the divorce can be issued. For pregnant women the Iddah is completed with the birth of the child (this applies to the woman but not the man).

A wife can apply to court to force her husband to issue the divorce, but if he is not at fault, he does not have to support her. If a divorce is granted, the wife must repay the marriage gift. The husband still has responsibility for supporting his children in all cases.

The Qur'an encourages the couple to try to reconcile their differences by allowing a member of each partner's family to help bring them back together, if God wills (Qur'an 4:35). If reconciliation fails, the man must support his wife until she remarries.

Legally, Muslims require a British civil divorce if they live in the UK. Muslim couples in the UK who want a religious divorce go through the Muslim Law (Shari'ah) Council in Wembley, Middlesex, or they can go through their local Mosque or Community Centre.



A Muslim couple have their divorce case heard in Iran, where most administrative offices observe the Shari'ah law as well as civil law.

"... when any of you intend to divorce women, do so at a time when their prescribed waiting period can properly start...if you are in doubt, the period of waiting shall be three months..."
(Qur'an 65:1&4)

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

1. Explain why there are different attitudes towards divorce in Christianity.
2. Summarise the Muslim view on divorce in 5 key points.
3. Explain how belief in a) the sanctity of the marriage vows and b) compassion could affect someone's attitude towards divorce.
4. What are the different Christian views regarding remarriage?
5. What is the Muslim view on remarriage?
6. **Evaluation practice:** Pick one of the statements below and respond as if it was a 12 marker.
a) 'Married couples should never divorce.'
b) 'There is nothing wrong with divorce for religious people'.



RELIGIOUS TEACHINGS ABOUT THE NATURE OF FAMILIES

The nature of families in Britain today:

Family life has changed over but the family is still considered the best environment for bringing up children and keeping society stable. The basic unit of mother, father and children (a nuclear family) is still most common in the West, although in the UK approximately 25% of children now live in single-parent families. There are more 'stepfamilies', where divorced people with children marry new partners with children of their own. Same-sex couples may have children from previous relationships, legally adopt children, conceive through IVF, or use surrogates.

In the past, families were larger, and often included grandparents and other relatives (an extended family) living together. For many non-Western cultures, the extended family unit is still very common.



An extended family



A nuclear family

Grandparents Plus report

A recent report from the charity Grandparents Plus found that more and more people in Britain are living extended family lives. Some young parents cannot afford full-time childcare and rely on grandparents, aunts and uncles and other relatives to fill the gap. As people are living longer, families that have elderly relatives may pool their resources to extend their homes so that everyone can live together.

Christianity and the role of parents

Good parents love, care for and raise their children to know right from wrong. Christian parents are expected to raise their children within their faith. The Catholic Church describes parenting like this:

"Here one learns endurance and joy of work [...] love, generous - and even repeated - forgiveness, and above all divine worship in prayer and the offering of one's life." (Catechism 1657)

Christian parents want their children to grow up with values such as respect for all life, generosity, compassion, loyalty and the ability to form loving relationships. They want them to be able to think for themselves and to have self-discipline, listen to others and be tolerant to others' views, while at the same time remaining true to themselves.

Christian teachings about the nature of families

Christians are commanded to love one another. They believe the way they relate to one another is important to God. Since, for Christians, love is at the heart of all relationships, they place a

very high value on family life because it is in a family that a child learns to love.

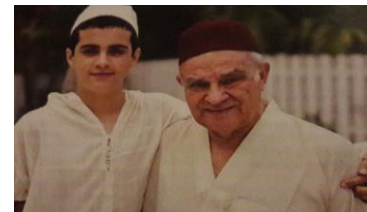
In Biblical times many people lived in extended families or households. The entire family group looked after the children and provided for everyone's welfare, old and young alike. The extended family passed on the religion. Customs and traditions of the society to the next generation. The commandment to 'Honour your father and mother' (Exodus 20: 12), particularly when parents are elderly and need support, is an important Christian belief today.

There are examples in the Bible of people who practised polygamy, and there was a law that protected inheritance rights of the firstborn child (Deuteronomy 21: 15-16). However, Christians believe the ideal marriage of one man and one woman for life was created at the beginning. Paul makes it clear that each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband to avoid sexual immorality (1 Corinthians 7: 2). Polygamous marriages cannot be performed in Britain as bigamy is illegal.

Some traditional Christians disapprove of same-sex parents because they feel the ideal is for children to grow up with a male and female role model as parents. Other Christians say that it is more important for children to be in a secure and loving family regardless of the gender of their parents.

Muslim beliefs about the family

For Muslims, the extended family is the basis of Islamic society and part of God's plan for human beings. The family shapes the moral values and character of children. Muslims care for elderly parents with kindness and respect because these parents loved and cared for their own children while they were young.



Older members of the family are respected by the younger members.

"Your Lord has commanded that you should worship none but Him, and that you be kind to your parents. If either or both of them reach old age with you, say no word that shows impatience with them, and do not be harsh with them, but speak to them respectfully." (Qur'an 17:23)

Islam allows for a man to have more than one wife at the same time (polygamy), but only under certain circumstances, and such

Key terms:

Family: a group of people who are related by blood, marriage or adoption.

Nuclear family: a couple and their children regarded as a basic social unit.

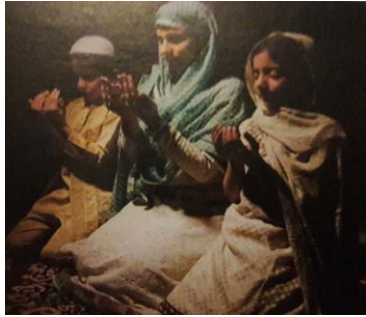
Stepfamily: a family that is formed on the remarriage of a divorced or widowed person and that includes a child or children

polygamy: the practice or custom of having more than one wife at the same time.

Bigamy: the offence of marrying someone while already married to another person.

Same-sex parents: people of the same sex who are raising children together.

a practice is not really considered applicable in modern life. The prophet Muhammad had several wives, which was customary at the time. Originally the reasons for polygamy were to protect women, particularly widows, who were unable to support themselves if their husbands died. However, a man should only marry additional wives if he is able to love and support them and treat them equally. He should also only do so with the formal consent of his first wife for moral and practical reasons. As mentioned previously polygamous marriages cannot be performed in Britain because bigamy is illegal.



The role of parents and children in Islam

Traditionally in Islam men are expected to work, provide for their wife and children, and take responsibility for major decisions. Women have an important role in looking after the home, raising Children and making decisions about the household. A Muslim mother commands great respect and obedience from her children.

Muslim parents are expected to love and care for their children, set a good example for them, and bring them up in their faith of Islam, including how to pray, keep halal food laws and live a good Muslim life. They will often support their children in finding a suitable marriage partner. Parents often send their children to a madrassah (mosque school) to learn how to read the Qur'an in Arabic. On Fridays, when men attend the mosque for prayers, mothers will pray in the home with their children.

Mothers have an important role in Islam

"Heaven is under the feet of the mothers" (Hadith)

Muslims do not approve of same-sex parenting because the ideal is for children to grow up with a male and female role model as parents. Since Muslims consider homosexual relationships and same-sex marriage to be wrong, same-sex parents would not be able to set a good example to their children because the beliefs of Islam condemn their relationship.

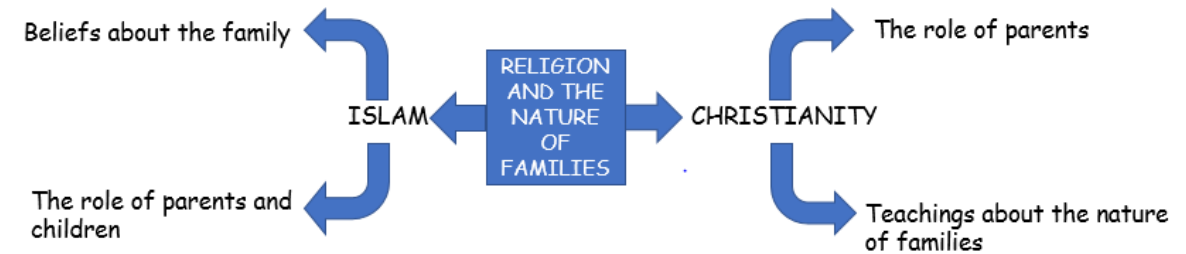


The nature of families – quick responses

1. Explain the difference between a nuclear family and an extended family. List the advantages and disadvantages of each.
2. Why some Christians and Muslims disapprove of same-sex parenting.

The nature of families – Key task

3. Copy and complete the following into your books adding in key bullet point details for each section



RELIGIOUS TEACHINGS ABOUT THE PURPOSE OF FAMILIES

The purpose of families:

The family is the main building block of any society. It serves a number of purposes:

- It controls sexual behaviour because it is where procreation mainly takes place
- It creates stability for family members and also for society itself
- It provides for the protection of children, supplying their basic needs and safeguarding them from harm
- It is where children learn how to relate to others so they can grow up and contribute positively to society
- It helps provides safety and security for the sick, elderly and disabled
- For religious parents, it involves educating children in their faith.

Relationships in Christian families

The idea of family is deeply ingrained in Christian beliefs about God. Christians believe God reveals himself as a Father, with Jesus his Son and humankind his children. God created life and so loves and cares for it. An important role of Christian parents is educating children in their faith. Christian parents are expected to be good role models for their children and to teach them moral values. Many Christian parents will nurture the spiritual lives of their children and make daily prayer part of the family routine. Some families send their children to faith schools, or to groups run by the church, in order to further their children's education in faith.



For Christians, a family reflects the relationship of Christ and the Church:

"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her." (Ephesians 5: 25)

The Christian Church teaches that both parents and children have responsibilities to one another.

The commandment to honour one's father and mother (Exodus 20: 12) applies to children of all ages, so it includes the respect and care given to the elderly members of the family.

"Listen to your father, who gave you life, and do not despise your mother when she is old." (Proverbs 23: 22)

Christians believe their children are gifts from God, and they must respect their human dignity:

"Children are a heritage from the Lord, offspring a reward

from him.

Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are children born in one's youth. Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them..." (Psalm 127: 3-5)

But children, too, have responsibilities to obey, love and respect their parents for all they have done to help them grow into mature adults:

"Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged." (Colossians 3: 20-21)

The Church of England website sums up the value Christians place on families:

"The family remains the most important grouping human beings have ever developed. Children thrive, grow and develop within the love and safeguarding of a family. Within the family we care for the young, the old and those with caring needs. Families should be able to offer each of their members commitment, fun, love, companionship and security."

Muslim beliefs about relationships in the family

The Qur'an addresses married people as 'guarded' and 'protected', as if their relationship was like a fortress protecting them from sin, loneliness and outside dangers. This protection is extended to all the members of the family, including children and the couples' own parents or other relatives.

Children

"For every tree there is a fruit and the fruit of the heart is the child." (Hadith)

For Muslims, children are a blessing from God and the family is especially important for providing a stable environment for their upbringing. Parents have a duty to raise their children to be good Muslims.

However, children also have a duty to be respectful to their parents and elders, a responsibility which continues into adulthood. The Qur'an makes it clear that to unkind or disrespectful to one's parents is a great sin (Qur'an 17: 23-24)

Key terms:

Procreation: bringing babies into the world; producing offspring.

Stability: safety and security; a stable society is one in which people's rights are protected and they are able to live peaceful, productive lives without continuous and rapid change.

Protection of children: keeping children safe from harm.

Educating children in a faith: bringing up children according to the religious beliefs of the parents.



Children learning at a madrassah; Muslims have a duty to educate children in their faith.

"Honour your children and protect their manners." (Hadith)

Older members of the family can be a source of wisdom



Christians develop the spiritual lives of their children.

"Lower your wing in humility towards your parents in kindness and say, 'Lord, have mercy on them, just as they cared for me when I was little.'" (Qur'an 17: 24)

"It is one of the greatest sins that a man should curse his parents." (Hadith)

"He who is good to his parents, blessings be upon him..." (Hadith)

The Elderly

For Muslims, old age is an important time in life when people can focus more deeply on their faith because the burdens of work and raising a family are largely over. Older people have a great deal of wisdom and experience to offer the younger members of a family. Islam honours the elderly for these reasons and also for the contribution they have made to the community.

Muslims have a responsibility to care for their parents when they become frail or ill. Most Muslims would not consider putting their elderly parents into a care home and many have their parents living with them. They do not regard their parents as a burden, but rather see it as an honour to be able to repay them for the love and support they gave them as children.



Young Muslims feel a duty to care for and support their elderly relatives

The purpose of families

1. Explain three purposes that the family serves in society today.
2. Explain how parents and children should treat each other according to Christian teaching.
3. Explain two ways in which Muslim families might differ from non-religious families in Britain.
4. Reflection thoughts: Pick one of the statements below and respond as if it was a 12 marker.
 - a) 'Families do not do enough for their elderly relatives in today's society.'
 - b) 'Educating children in a faith is just brainwashing them'.

In your answer you:

- Should give reasoned arguments in support of the statement
- Should give reasoned arguments to support a different point of view
- Should refer to religious arguments
- May refer to non-religious arguments
- Should reach a justified conclusion.



GENDER EQUALITY

Gender Equality

Gender equality means that men and women should be given the same rights and opportunities as each other. Many people in Britain today agree with the idea of gender equality, but there are many examples where it does not happen. Something that prevents it is gender prejudice, which is often based on sexual stereotyping. An example of this is the idea that women are naturally caring or the weaker sex, so they should look after the home while men go out to work. Sexual stereotyping can lead to gender discrimination, perhaps by not giving a man a job looking after young children or not employing a woman on a building site.



Player wages in the Premier league average out at around £43,000 a week with many earning substantially more. The best paid women's' footballers earn an average of £35-40,000 a year



The roles of men and women

In the past, men had positions of power in society and more rights than women. For example, women were not allowed to vote or divorce their husbands, and had to do almost entirely what their fathers or husbands wanted. The Sex Discrimination Act (1975) made gender discrimination illegal in the UK. Despite this, women generally earn lower pay than men. Some are paid less than men who are doing the same jobs. Women make up roughly half the work force, but men hold a higher proportion of senior positions. Many people still think in stereotypical terms, for example automatically thinking a doctor is a man or a nurse is a woman. This suggests they think the man holds the more senior position.



In a family, the mother brings new life into the world and will usually be the baby's prime carer. The father may help and support his wife but there is no doubt about the mother's important role at this time. Just because roles are different does not necessarily mean they are unequal. Each family decides who will care for children and who will go out to work; often this depends on financial considerations and whether there is help from the extended family. It may also depend on the different skills of the parents.

Christian beliefs and responses

Christians believe that all people have been created as equals in the image of God. The command to love one's neighbour means that discrimination is wrong. Jesus treated women with respect, welcomed them as disciples, and showed in the story of Mary

and Martha (Luke 10: 38-42) that they were capable of things other than domestic tasks. Paul emphasises this in Galatians 3: 28 when he says:

'There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.' (Galatians 3: 28)

Some traditional Christians believe that men are the head of the family and that women should mainly stay at home and care for the children. This may stem from a literal interpretation of Bible texts that reflect the position of women at the time they were written. For example, in Genesis 3: 16 God punishes Eve for her disobedience, saying:

'[...] with painful labour you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.' (Genesis 3: 16)

Most Christians today see marriage as an equal partnership where the different gifts of each person, male and female, strengthen family life.

Some people have argued that although Christianity condemns any kind of discrimination there is often the accusation that women are being discriminated against within the faith. For example, women cannot be priests in the Roman Catholic Church and the first female bishops in the Anglican Church were not appointed until 2015.

Muslim beliefs about gender equality

Muslims believe that God created all people equal. The Quran teaches that men and women were created from a single soul and have the same spiritual human nature.

"People, we created you all from a single man and a single woman, and made you into races and tribes so that you should recognise one another." (Qur'an 49:13)

Muhammad worked to unite the tribes in Madinah into one community (ummah) under God, with equality and justice for all. Men and women have the same religious and moral responsibilities. Muhammad taught that anyone, man or woman, who does a good deed for God's sake will be rewarded (Qur'an 16: 97)

Islamic law recognises the full property rights of women before and after marriage. A married

Key terms:

Gender equality:

Giving people the same rights and opportunities regardless of whether they are male or female.

Gender prejudice:

Unfairly judging someone before the facts are known; holding biased opinions about an individual or group based on their gender.

Sexual

stereotyping:

Having a fixed general idea or image of how men and women will behave.

Gender

discrimination:

Acting against someone on the basis of their gender; discrimination is usually seen as wrong and may be against the law

woman may keep her maiden name. She is entitled to receive marital gifts and does not need to spend her own money on the household. She has the right to full financial support within marriage and during the waiting period for divorce. Her husband must provide child support. In some Muslim countries, women are not given full rights under the law, but this is against the teachings in the Qur'an.

The roles of men and women in Islam

Many Muslim families place a high value on the mother's role in bringing up her children in Islam. Men are expected to provide for their families and make decisions about their general welfare. Many modern British Muslim families share these duties because often both parents have jobs.

In Islam all religious leaders are men and women do not pray at the front of the mosque.



British Muslim women can maintain successful careers alongside their family life.

Gender prejudice and discrimination



Non-Muslims often assume that Muslim women suffer gender prejudice and discrimination over issues such as wearing the veil, girls' education and restrictions placed on women's freedoms (driving a car, voting, etc). Muslims point out that in some countries some discrimination may take place because of different cultural practices rather than because of teachings in the Qur'an. Some Muslim women in the UK may suffer prejudice and discrimination for the way they dress, for example choosing to wear a hijab.

Some Muslim women in the UK may sometimes feel discriminated against for their choice to wear a hijab.

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

1. Explain, using examples, the difference between gender prejudice and gender discrimination.
2. Explain two Christian beliefs about the roles of men and women in society today. Refer to scripture in your answer.
3. Explain Muslim beliefs about the roles of men and women.
4. Should women be allowed to be leaders in religion? Explain your reasons fully.
5. **Evaluation practice:** Pick one of the statements below and respond as if it was a 12 marker.
 - a) 'Christian mothers should stay home and care for children.'
 - b) 'Muslim women have equal rights to Muslim men.'
 In your answer you:
 - Should give reasoned arguments in support of the statement
 - Should give reasoned arguments to support a different point of view
 - Should refer to religious arguments
 - May refer to non-religious arguments
 - Should reach a justified conclusion.

