

Religion, Crime & Punishment Revision Guide



Specification Content:	Done?
Religion, crime and the causes of crime	
• Good and evil intentions and actions, including whether it can ever be good to cause suffering.	
• Reasons for crime, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • poverty and upbringing • mental illness and addiction • greed and hate • opposition to an unjust law 	
• Views about people who break the law for these reasons.	
• Views about different types of crime, including hate crimes, theft and murder.	
Religion and punishment	
• The aims of punishment, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retribution • deterrence • reformation 	
• The treatment of criminals, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prison • corporal punishment • community service 	
• Forgiveness	
• The death penalty	
• Ethical arguments related to the death penalty, including those based on the principle of utility and sanctity of life	

Name: _____

Key Terms:

Capital punishment: Death penalty; state sanctioned execution for a capital offence; not legal in UK.

Community service order: UK punishment involving the criminal doing a set number of hours of physical labour.

Conscience: Sense of right and wrong; guilty voice in our head; seen as the voice of God by many religious believers.

Corporal punishment: Punishment in which physical pain is inflicted on the criminal; not legal in the UK.

Crime: Action which breaks the law; can be against the person (e.g. murder), against property (e.g. vandalism), or against the state (e.g. treason).

Deterrence: Aim of punishment to put a person off committing a crime by the level of punishment.

Duty: What we have a responsibility to do.

Evil: Something or someone considered morally very wrong or wicked; often linked to the idea of a devil or other malevolent being.

Forgiveness: Letting go of blame against a person for wrongs they have done; moving on.

Greed: Reason for committing crime – wanting or desiring something or more of something.

Hate crime: A crime committed because of prejudice, e.g. assaulting a person because they are gay or Asian.

Imprisonment: Locking someone up and taking away of civil liberties of a criminal.

Law: The rules a country demands its citizens follow, the breaking of which leads to punishment.

Murder: Unlawfully killing another person.

Order: The enforcement of rules, e.g. by a police force.

Parole: Release of a criminal from prison under the condition they will meet with a parole officer who can monitor their behaviour.

Protection: Additional aim of punishment; to keep people safe.

Reformation: Aim of punishment; helping the criminal see how and why their behaviour was wrong, so that their mindset changes for the better.

Reparation: Additional aim of punishment; where the criminal makes up for, or pays back for, their crimes.

Retribution: Aim of punishment; getting the criminal back for their crimes.

Theft: Taking something without the owner's consent.

Victim: Those who are directly affected by a crime, e.g. the person assaulted.

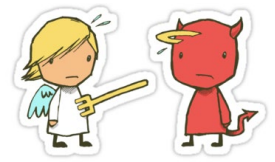
Vindication: Additional aim of punishment; the punishment exists to justify the law.

Young offenders: Criminals under the age of 18.

Religion, crime and the causes of crime

Good and evil intentions and actions, including whether it can ever be good to cause suffering:

Evil is seen as the abuse of the free will God gave to humans which allowed them to choose right from wrong. In order to be able to see and appreciate good, then evil has to exist. Most Christians believe in a figure called the devil or Satan, who is an evil power, though ultimately less powerful than God. The devil continually tries to tempt people and encourage them to behave badly.



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 the law, such as generosity and love. Similarly, many Christians believe that even though actions such as adultery are not illegal, they are still wrong.

Christians feel that they should follow the example of Jesus, who helped many whom he saw were suffering and who thought those who believe in God should help those who suffer. 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.

Reasons for crime:

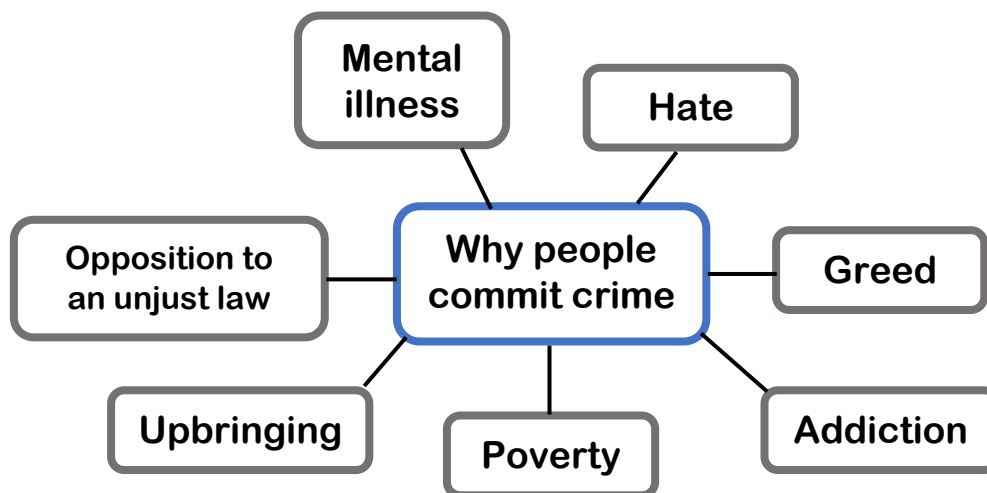
Most people believe that committing crime is wrong, but sometimes how wrong it is may depend on why it was committed. Some people consider certain circumstances acceptable for committing crime. While Christians wouldn't agree with committing crime in almost any circumstances, especially as they believe that God has put law making authorities in



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

Romans 13:1

place. They also believe that laws are important for keeping order in society so that people may live in peace. St. Paul tells Christians to 'obey the laws of the land' and Christians believe that they should 'hate the sin but love the sinner'. Therefore, criminals should have help rather than judgement.



Some Christians believe that, irrespective of the reason behind why the crime has been committed, punishment should be as severe as the crime that has been committed. Others believe that helping offenders not to commit anymore crimes is really important. Lawbreakers have rights, and these should be protected, even while they are being punished. Christians believe that inhumane treatment of offenders is wrong.

“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. “

As part of the Parable of the Sheep and Goats, Jesus gave various actions that are pleasing to God, and these include treating prisoners well. 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:

Laws are made to protect individuals within society. Most crimes are committed by people under the age of 25 and men are more likely to commit crime than women.

There are three types of crime:

1. *Crimes against the person* – offenses causing direct harm to a person, for example, murder, rape, GBH and hate crimes.
2. *Crimes against property* – offences that damage or deprive people of their property, for example, arson, burglary, trespassing.
3. *Crimes against the State* – offences that potentially endanger everyone or affect the smooth running of society, for example, terrorism, selling state secrets, perjury.

Hate crimes, murder and theft are among crimes against a person. Hate crimes usually consist of violent actions against someone because of their race, religion, sexuality, disability or gender. Hate crimes are thought to be more serious than something like theft,

as it targets an individual because of prejudice. Murder is a more serious crime, however, as it is the unlawful and deliberate killing of a human being.

Christians believe that God created all humans with equal value and no individuals or groups should be singled out for inferior treatment from others. Jesus taught that all people should 'love their neighbour'. This means that everyone should treat everyone they meet with respect. Jesus also mixed with people from all sections of society and did not turn anybody away. Christians believe in the Golden Rule '**Do to others what you want them to do to you.**' Therefore, even though theft is considered to be a less serious crime than murder and hate crimes, but it is still wrong.

"There is neither Jew nor Gentile, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." *Galatians 3:28*

Religion and punishment

The aims of punishment:

Whenever a punishment is imposed by a court, the judge has to consider what purpose the punishment will serve. Three main aims of punishment are:

- **Retribution:** This is the least positive aim as it means to get your own back. Society on behalf of the victim, seeks the offender to pay for what they have done. A Christian teaching that reflects this idea is the Old Testament teachings of 'An eye for an eye'. While Christians don't agree with this aim, they do believe that punishment is important, it is more important to achieve other aims with punishment.
- **Deterrence:** Many believe that if offenders see that crimes are punished severely then it should put them off from committing those crimes. It should also show others in society that crimes are punished, and it should also deter them from committing similar crimes.
- **Reformation:** This aim is the most important to Christians because it seeks to help offenders by working with them to understand that their behaviour is hurting society. It is hoped that the offenders will change their behaviour and attitude and become responsible, law-abiding members of society.



"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 to not seek revenge, but instead show an example by showing compassion. A more positive response is to work with the offender to help them turn their life around by helping them understand the effect of their actions on others.

The treatment of criminals:

Christians believe that the law has a responsibility to punish and care for the criminal whilst trying to reform them. While prison removes freedoms, separates prisoners from families

and removes their rights, it also has concern for their reform to be released back into society. Some Christians focus on the justice element of punishment, based on the 'eye for an eye' teaching in the Old Testament. However, most Christians believe in people being treated fairly and humanely, giving them a chance to face up to their crimes and have a chance to turn their lives around.

Custodial Sentences - Locking the offender up	
Prisons (adult)	The UK has different types of prisons. High security are category A and B and house the most dangerous offenders. Category C is for those serving shorter sentences and category D are open prisons for first-time offenders and those due to be released.
High security mental health institutions	House offenders with serious psychological disorders, who threaten the safety of others and themselves, for example, psychopaths, sociopaths and schizophrenics.
Young Offenders institutions	House offenders classed as children (under 18 years of age). Routines are specifically targeted at children's needs.
Non-custodial sentences - Alternatives to prison	
ASBO	Anti-Social Behaviour Order sets restrictions that the offender must stick to, for example curfew, not to go to certain places.
Community Service	Unpaid work in the community, for up to 300 hours. They do not have a choice in what they do although their offence and experiences may influence magistrates.
Curfew	Must return home by a set hour, often used with tagging.
Tagging	An electronic surveillance device attached to their leg.
Fines	A set amount of money must be paid for the offence.
Probation	Offenders must meet regularly with a probation officer who monitors behaviour.
Restorative justice	Young offenders attend sessions to look at their crime, why it was wrong and its effect on the victim; often including meeting and talking with their victim.

- Prison: This is reserved for offenders who have committed a serious crime. Prisoners are locked in cells for much of the day, are fed at set times and have to do manual work for little money. While most Christians agree that prison should be used as a punishment for serious crimes, many strongly support trying to support prisoners while in prison and are keen to see education and training facilities well used.
- Corporal punishment: This is to punish the offender by causing them physical pain. This could be done by whipping them or hitting them repeatedly with a cane. It is illegal in the UK, but some countries still use it. For example, Saudi Arabia allows caning for punishments such as gambling. Christians do not agree with corporal punishment as they believe that, as the teachings of Jesus focus on love and care, this does not leave room for this type of punishment.
- Community service: Crimes such as vandalism, benefit fraud or minor assaults may be punished by community service. This punishment allows the offender to pay society back for what they have done and receive help in reforming their

behaviour. It involves doing between 40 and 300 hours of unpaid work in the community such as removing graffiti, cleaning wasteland or decorating public places. It might also involve drug or alcohol rehabilitation. Christians are in general agreement that it is a suitable punishment for fairly minor offences as it enables the offender to be reformed and help them to improve their lives and move away from a life of crime.

Forgiveness:

This is a core belief within Christianity and one that Jesus emphasised in his teachings:

<p>“Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.”</p> <p>The Lord’s Prayer</p>	<p>“Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother? Jesus answered, ‘I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.’”</p> <p>Matthew 18:21-22</p>	<p>“Father forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.”</p> <p>Luke 23:34</p>
---	--	--

Christians are expected to forgive others, regardless of what they have done, and Christians believe that in turn, God will forgive them. However, many Christians would argue that forgiveness is not a replacement for punishment. It is possible to forgive somebody who has committed murder and to believe that justice is done when they are sentenced to a long period of imprisonment. The intention of imprisonment should be to reform the offender, so they will not reoffend when released.

The church interprets the teaching of Jesus to forgive ‘seventy-seven times’ as an unlimited amount. Christians believe that as there is no limit on the forgiveness God bestows on humans, there should be not limit on the forgiveness we give each other.

The death penalty:

Capital punishment is a form of punishment where the offender is executed by the state. It is usually reserved for the most serious crimes such as murder, war crimes or drug offences. The death penalty was permanently abolished in the UK in 1969. One of the reasons for the abolition of the death penalty was the executing of offenders who had been wrongly convicted. Some people agree with the death penalty for those who have committed the worst types of crimes, e.g. murder, rape or child abuse. However, others believe that the death penalty is a barbaric punishment that should not be used at all. There are a number of different ways that people can be executed, ranging from lethal injection, hanging, firing squad or electrocution.



<i>Arguments for</i>	<i>Arguments against</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An ‘eye for an eye, life for a life’ means that murderers should pay with their life • It is a deterrent; therefore, it puts people off committing horrendous crimes • It brings justice for the victims and their families 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retribution is uncivilised; two wrongs do not make a right. • Most murders are done on the spur of the moment, so the death penalty doesn’t deter others

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prison is a waste of resources – the death penalty saves society money • It protects society from the worst of society 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executing the murderer doesn't help the victims' families get over the loss of a loved one • Legal systems fail, and innocent people can and have been executed • All life is sacred, and murderers should be given the chance to reform
---	--

The sanctity of life is the belief that all life is precious and only God has the right to take life. This appears to show that the death penalty is wrong. However, some people believe that as the death penalty is reserved for those who have already taken someone's life, therefore they deserve to die. The principle of utility suggests that an action that promotes the maximum amount of happiness for the largest number of people is the right action to take. You might think that this suggests that the death penalty is acceptable, but it doesn't. As the death penalty doesn't protect society from murder, it doesn't provide happiness for the largest group of people and is therefore unacceptable.

<p>“Whoever sheds human blood, by humans shall their blood be shed.”</p> <p>Genesis 9:6</p>	<p>“Life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth.”</p> <p>Exodus 21:23-24</p>	<p>“I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that they turn away from their ways and live.”</p> <p>Ezekiel 33:11</p>	<p>“Love your neighbour as yourself.”</p> <p>Mark 12:30</p>	<p>“Pray for those who persecute you.”</p> <p>Sermon on the Mount</p>
--	---	--	--	--

Individual Christians will have different beliefs about whether the death penalty should or shouldn't be allowed. Those who agree with the death penalty use teachings from the Old Testament to support their views. Christians who oppose the death penalty will do so mainly because they do not believe that taking another human life is right. They believe that only God should do that. Jesus taught about the importance of forgiveness and warned humans not to judge each other.

The Church of England was at the forefront of the move to end the use of the death penalty in the UK. It is seen as a breach of the commandment 'do not kill' because a life is being deliberately ended. It also denies the sanctity of life as the life of the criminal can be taken and is against their human dignity. There is no chance of reform of the person as death is too final.

Practice Exam Questions

1-mark questions:

- Which of the following is an aim of punishment?
a) Prison b) Deterrence c) Forgiveness d) Murder

- Which of the following is not a reason for crime?
a) Poverty b) sanctity of life c) mental illness d) greed

2-mark questions:

- Give two different causes of crime.
- Give two religious beliefs about forgiveness.

4-mark questions:

- Explain two contrasting beliefs in contemporary British society about whether the death penalty should exist in the UK.
In your answer you should refer to the main religious tradition of Great Britain and one or more other religious traditions.
- Explain two similar religious beliefs about people who break the law.
In your answer you must refer to one or more religious traditions.

5-mark questions:

- Explain two religious beliefs about the death penalty.
Refer to sacred writings or another source of religious belief and teaching in your answer.
- Explain two religious beliefs about reformation as an aim of punishment.
Refer to scripture or sacred writings in your answer.

12-mark questions:

- 'It is right to forgive all offenders whoever they are whatever they have done.'
- 'Reformation is the best aim of punishment.'

Evaluate this statement. In your answer you:

- should give reasoned arguments in support of this 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.
-