

Christian Beliefs, Teachings and Practices Revision Guide

Name:

Christian Beliefs and Teachings

Revision Guide

Use the following checklist to make sure you have revised everything.

Key Beliefs	Done? ✓
<i>The nature of God:</i>	
• God as omnipotent, loving and just, and the problem of evil and suffering	
• The oneness of God and the Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.	
• Different Christian beliefs about creation including the role of Word and Spirit (John 1:1-3 and Genesis 1:1-3).	
• Different Christian beliefs about the afterlife and their importance, including: resurrection and life after death; judgement, heaven and hell.	
Jesus Christ and Salvation	
Beliefs and teachings about:	
• the incarnation and Jesus as the Son of God	
• the crucifixion, resurrection and ascension	
• sin, including original sin	
• the means of salvation, including law, grace and Spirit	
• the role of Christ in salvation including the idea of atonement.	

Contents

- The Nature of God: Omnipotent, Loving, Just.
- The Nature of God: One and Trinity
- Beliefs about Creation, including the role of the Word and the Spirit.
- The Son – The incarnation and Jesus as the Son of God.
- Sin and Salvation – Law, Grace and Spirit and Atonement.
- The Afterlife – Judgment, Heaven and Hell.

Key Words

Ascension = Jesus going up to Heaven after his resurrection.

Atonement = The death of Jesus restoring the relationship between God and humans.

Benevolent = loving.

Creation = Making the universe. Christians believe that it was made by God.

Crucifixion = being killed by hanging on a cross, as Jesus was.

God = The creator and ruler of the universe; the supreme being

Grace = the love and mercy given to humans by God.

Heaven = A perfect place of reward after death. Eternity with God.

Hell = A terrible place of punishment after death. Eternity without God.

Incarnation– To become a person. When the Son of God becomes human as Jesus.

Jesus = The son of God. Part of the Trinity. God as human.

Just = The belief that God knows about right and wrong, and judges people fairly on how they live their lives.

Law = the rules that God expects humans to live by.

Monotheism = The belief that there is One God.

Loving = The belief that God is kind and cares for everything in the universe. God is **benevolent**.

Omnipotent = The belief that God is Almighty or all-powerful

Original Sin = the first sin that Adam and Eve committed, which is passed on to all humans.

Purgatory = A place to be cleansed of sins before going to Heaven.

Resurrection = coming back to life as Jesus did after he was crucified.

Salvation = being saved from Hell and being able to go to Heaven.

Soul – The spiritual, immortal part of a human. The part of a human that is like God.

Spirit = the Holy Spirit. Part of the Trinity, sent to Earth after Jesus' ascension, which is God's presence in the world.

The Word = the idea of Jesus existing before the world was created.

Trinity = The belief that God is Three-persons-in-One, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

God as Omnipotent, Loving and Just

Omnipotent (all-powerful)

Christians believe that God is perfect; if there was anything God could not do, then God would not be the Supreme Being. They believe he can do anything, for example, when God makes the world, God makes the heavens and the earth out of nothing.

Christians believe God is almighty because of the Bible stories showing God carrying out impossible activities like miracles. (e.g. calming the storm).

Loving (benevolent)

A Supreme Being has to be completely loving. Without love God could not be perfect.

Christians believe God is loving because of the Bible stories where God looks after people in need, for example when Jesus heals a paralysed man.

God sent his Son Jesus to make a sacrifice to save humans from the punishment their sins deserve. This shows how much he loves people.

Just (fair)

Christians believe God is just because in the Bible God rewards people who follow his rules and punishes those who don't. God gives Moses the 10 Commandments, and tells him to make sure the people follow the rules. If

humans follow God's rules they can be rewarded in heaven. If they don't, they can be punished in hell.

If God is loving then God also has to be fair. Fairness (Justice) is love-in-action.



The Trinity



Christians believe that there is **ONE GOD** who has revealed himself as **THREE SEPARATE PERSONS**:

- God the Father,
- God the Son
- God the Holy Spirit.

God the Father

God the Father is understood as the creator. In the apostle's creed, which states Christian beliefs, he is described as 'God the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.' God the Father is strong and powerful. He protects those who follow him. In the Book of Genesis in the Bible, God creates the world and the Garden of Eden for Adam and Eve.



In the Old Testament, God the Father gives Moses the 10 Commandments as rules to live by.

In the New Testament, God is referred to by Jesus as 'Abba, father'. 'Abba' is similar to our word 'daddy'. It is a way of showing that God loves and cares for his followers, and can be trusted as a good father is trusted.

God the Son

Jesus is believed to be God **incarnate**. This means God taking on a body and becoming human. Christians believe that Jesus was not conceived naturally but was placed in Mary by the Holy Spirit. Christians believe that Jesus was



completely human, and also completely God.

Jesus shows people the love of God and sets an example to follow. He teaches them to “Love your neighbour” and was prepared to sacrifice his own life to take the punishment humans deserve for their sins. Christians believe Jesus came back to life after his death to show that he really was God’s Son, and also to prove there is life after death.

Jesus shows God’s power through performing miracles, calming the storm, healing the paralysed man and feeding the 5,000.

Jesus also teaches about the justice of God. He says that at the end of time God will judge people on how they have lived their lives. Good people will be rewarded with heaven and bad people will be sent to hell.

God the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is God’s presence and love in the world. In the Bible the Holy Spirit is called the *paraclete*, which means someone who supports another person by speaking up for them and comforting them. They believe the Holy Spirit will support them when they are judged by God.

After Jesus died, the Bible says that the Holy Spirit came to his followers, to help and strengthen them. This event is called **Pentecost**. Tongues of flame appeared above the heads of the Christians and they were able to speak in different languages.

Some Christians believe that the Holy Spirit gives them God’s power to do miraculous things, like speaking different languages and healing people. Other Christians believe that the Holy Spirit helps them to live good lives. The results of living a good life are often called the **fruits of the Spirit**, and include love, joy, peace, goodness etc.

Creation

The story of the creation of the world is mentioned in two key places in the Bible:



- **Genesis** 1:1-3 in the Old Testament
- **John** 1:1-3 in the New Testament

The book of **Genesis** is the first book in the Bible at the beginning of the Old Testament. It tells of the world being created in 6 days with God resting on the 7th Day.

It starts with the words *“In the beginning, God created the Heavens and the Earth. Now the Earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the **spirit of God** was hovering over the waters. And God said, “let there be light,” and there was light.”*

Christians believe that God has always existed and will always exist (He is **eternal**). They believe that God existed before the world was created and that He created the Earth for humans to live on. This part of Genesis shows that the **Holy Spirit** (the Spirit of God) was involved in creation and, like God the Father, existed before the world was created.

The book of **John** is the first book of the New Testament in the Bible. It tells of the idea of Jesus existing before the world was created. This idea of Jesus is known as ‘**the Word**’ (or ‘logos’ in Greek). It starts by saying *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through Him all things were made; without Him nothing was made that has been made.”*

Later in the chapter, John describes the Word as the light which shines in darkness and then writes of the Word becoming flesh as the Son of God, Jesus.

These beliefs are important to Christians today. They show that:

- God the Father created everything.
- Jesus and the Holy Spirit were involved in the creation.
- The Holy Spirit, Jesus and the Father are united in the Trinity.
- God the Father, the Holy Spirit and Jesus are eternal.
- Jesus is the light in the darkness, saving people from Hell.
- God always intended to send Jesus to save people.

The Life of Jesus



Jesus' mother Mary was visited by an angel to tell her that she was going to become pregnant with the son of God, Jesus. She was surprised as she was not yet married, but was engaged to Joseph, and was a virgin.

Christians believe that Mary became pregnant through the Holy Spirit and they describe Jesus as 'God incarnate' (God in human form).

When Jesus grew up he became a **rabbi** or teacher. He spent **three** years gathering followers, teaching them about God, and performing miracles. Some of his teachings were rules to follow, others were stories with special meanings. His miracles show the power and love of God, as they help people in need. They also prove to Christians that Jesus is The Son of God.

Christians try to follow the example of Jesus and they look at his actions to help guide them in their everyday lives.

Christians believe that Jesus' teachings and example are important for lots of reasons. They think that his actions, for example miracles, show that Jesus is the Son of God and show that God is omnipotent, loving and just.

They believe that the way he lived his life gives important rules to live by, sets an example to follow, explains how you should treat others. Jesus taught Christians how to pray to God, and they still use the 'Our Father' prayer today, which is the prayer that Jesus taught them.

Some of the most important lessons from Jesus' life are:

Rules:

The Golden Rule

"So in everything, treat others as you would like to be treated, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets."

The Greatest Commandment

Jesus said that the most important rules are: “*Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.*” And “*Love your neighbour as yourself.*”

Parables (stories that Jesus told in order to get a message across):

The Prodigal (Wasteful) Son

There was a man who had two sons. The younger one said to his father, ‘Father, give me my share of the estate.’ So he divided his property between them.

The younger son left home and spent all of his money having fun. He had nothing left and struggled to survive. He tried to find work on farms.

He realised that he should go home and ask for his father’s forgiveness and beg to be allowed to work for him.

When he got home, his Father was so happy that he threw a party and killed the calf that they had been fattening up for a special occasion. Rather than being angry with his son, the father celebrated his return and forgave him.



The Good Samaritan

A Jewish man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. Another man (from the Levite tribe) also passed by on the other side. But a third man stopped to help. He was a Samaritan and the Samaritans are normally enemies of the Jews. He took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. He gave money to the innkeeper to look after him.

The message in this story is that you should treat your enemy as your friend (love your enemy).

Miracle Stories

Healing the paralysed man

People gathered to see Jesus speak and gathered in such large numbers that there was no room left, not even outside the door. Some men came, bringing

to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus by digging through it and then lowered the mat the man was lying on. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, "Son, your sins are forgiven."

He said to the man, "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home." He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone and they praised God.

This story shows Christians that Jesus can do miracles and also that He can forgive sins (only God can do this, so Jesus must be God).

The calming of the storm

Jesus was in a boat with his disciples. A storm developed, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. Jesus was sleeping. The disciples woke him and said to him, "Teacher, don't you care if we drown?"

He got up, told the wind and the waves to be still and the wind died down and it was completely calm.



He said to his disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?"

They were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!"

Sin and Salvation

Christians believe that there are two ways in which everybody is sinful.

They are born with **original sin**, which comes from the first sin that Adam and Eve committed when they disobeyed God in the Garden of Eden and ate the forbidden fruit.



Everybody also commits sins in their lives by disobeying the **laws** of God. For example, by lying or stealing.

If people die without being forgiven for their sins, they will spend eternity away from God, in **Hell**. They cannot get close to God in Heaven while they are sinful.

God does not want this to happen, but He is also fair and just. It would not be just to allow everybody to go straight to Heaven even though they have sinned.

God gives people a way of being forgiven by sending Jesus to Earth to be sacrificed. He does this through His **grace** because He wants people to have a way to be forgiven as he loves the humans he created.

To be saved, Christians need to follow the **law** of God and, when they break God's law, they need to realise that they have done so and ask for **forgiveness**. To be given forgiveness, they need to **repent** (say sorry) for the things they have done wrong. They also need to be **baptised** to wash away original sin and to show that they accept Jesus' sacrifice.

Jesus sacrificed himself through the **crucifixion** to pay the price for humans' sins so that humans could be close to God. This is known as **atonement**. Through atonement, Christians are given **salvation** and can go to **Heaven** to spend eternity with God.

After Jesus died on the cross, He was **resurrected** (came back to life). This proves that Jesus is God and shows them that the same thing can happen to anybody if they follow Jesus. Christians believe that they will be resurrected to eternal life in Heaven with God. Christians celebrate Jesus' resurrection at Easter.

Jesus spent some time on Earth and then ascended to Heaven and Christians believe He is in Heaven with God the Father. The **ascension** is further proof that Jesus is divine. It also shows Christians that He will always be there and that He is ready to return one day.

Christians believe that the **Holy Spirit** was sent down after the ascension to help them in many ways. The Holy Spirit helps Christians to spread God's message and also guides and strengthens them in their lives. This makes it possible for them to follow God's rules, to get close to God and to achieve salvation.

Judgement

Christians believe that God will judge them when they die and will decide who goes to Heaven and who goes to Hell. One way that this is explained is through the story that Jesus told, called the parable of the sheep and the goats. This explains who will be rewarded in Heaven and who will be punished in Hell.

The Parable of the Sheep and the Goats



When Jesus comes again all the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.



Then he will say to those on his right, '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 hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'

Then the righteous will ask, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'

Jesus will reply, 'Whatever you did for anyone who needed help, you did for me.'

Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his demons. For you did nothing to help me.'

They will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?'

He will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for anyone in need, you did not do for me.'

Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.

Christian beliefs about the soul

Christians believe that each human being has a **soul**. This is generally thought to be distinct from the brain and the rest of the body.

The soul is not a physical thing, e.g. you cannot see or touch it. It is the spiritual part of a human being. Christians believe it is immortal, meaning that it doesn't die when the body dies, but lives forever.

Because of their souls, humans do not simply die but have the chance of eternal life with God in heaven.

Some Christians believe that we need both a soul *and* a body to be a proper person. These Christians believe that in the afterlife our souls will receive a new body.



Heaven, Hell and Purgatory



Heaven

Christians believe that if you have lived a good life, followed God's rules, been baptised to wash away original sin and repented your sins then you will be rewarded in Heaven, which is an eternity with God.

- A traditional view of heaven is that it is a place filled with peace. There are angels and people playing harps with light and white everywhere.
- Another view of heaven is that it will be a new, perfect earth – we will live like we have done on earth, but without any sin or suffering.
- Some Christians believe that when Jesus returns to judge us our bodies will come back to life and that we will have these bodies in heaven.
- Other Christians believe that we will have new, perfect bodies.
- Some believe that we will be spirits without a body.

- Most Christians accept that heaven will be completely different to any experience we could have on earth and that we will not know what it is like until we get there.

Hell

If you have not done all of the things necessary to get into Heaven, Christians believe you will go to Hell.

- The traditional view of hell is of a fiery place filled with demons torturing wicked people.
- Many Christians believe that this is symbolic, not literal. They believe that hell is a poetic way of describing an eternity away from God.
- Some Christians believe that hell is not real at all and focus on the idea of God as loving and forgiving.

Purgatory

Roman Catholics (but not other Christians) believe that most Christians are not ready to go straight to heaven when they die. First they must go to purgatory to work off their sins. Protestants do not believe in Purgatory.

Catholics will often pray for the soul of a dead person so that they will not have to spend too long in purgatory.