

Theme E - Crime and punishment

Crime

Reasons for crime

Reasons for crime

Upbringing: Not being taught right from wrong

Mental illness: Not understanding the difference between right and wrong due to a medical condition that affects a person's feelings, emotions, and moods.

Poverty: Not having enough money or food

Addiction: Committing a crime to get money to pay for it

Greed: Committing crimes to have something they cannot afford

Opposition to a law: Breaking the law because it is unfair

Religious attitudes to the reasons for crime

All religions say that the law should be followed.

In Christianity, followers should follow the laws of their country - "Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established."

However, Christians accept that sometimes there is a valid reason for breaking the law, and those that commit crimes should be forgiven and helped - "Love your neighbour."

Christians are expected to challenge laws they think are morally wrong.

In Islam, Shari'ah law is both secular and religious. Breaking the law breaks Allah's law and man's law. Mitigating circumstances, such as poverty or upbringing, should be considered.

Attitudes to different types of crime

Hate crimes

Christians do not agree with hate crimes, because they target individuals and are motivated by hatred.

Jesus views everyone equally, and so should Christians - "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

Muslims do not agree with hate crimes, because they believe that everyone is equal and should be treated that way, with no individual or group being singled out as inferior - 'God commands justice and prohibits wrongdoing and injustice.'

Murder

Christians do not agree with murder because it breaks one of the Ten Commandments - "Do not murder."

Muslims do not agree with murder because they believe in the sanctity of life and therefore no one has the right to deliberately take human life - "And do not kill one another."

Theft

Christians do not agree with theft because it breaks one of the Ten Commandments - "Do not steal."

Muslims do not agree with theft. There should be no reason to steal because charity is given to the poor. Under Shariah law, punishment for theft is to have a hand cut off - "As to the thief, male or female, cut off his or her hands."

Attitudes to law breakers

Christian attitudes to law breakers

If a person breaks the law they should be punished appropriately - "Let everybody be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established." This protects people from crime and deters people from offending.

Christians are more willing to treat an offender who had good intentions with more mercy than one who acted out of evil intentions.

Islamic attitudes to law breakers

The Qur'an emphasises the justice of Allah, and that we are all accountable for our actions. Those who break the law should be punished accordingly, as they have broken their responsibility to God and to the community.

Muslims accept that there may be a reason why the crime has been committed, and that will be taken into account when deciding the punishment.

Crime

An action which breaks the law

Hate crime

A crime motivated by hate, e.g. racism, homophobia

Justice

Bringing about what is fair and making up for a wrong that has been done

Offender

A person who is found guilty of breaking the law

Sanctity of life

All life is holy as it created and loved by God

Secular

Not connected with religion

Theme E - Crime and punishment

Punishment

Aims of punishment

Deterrence

A punishment that tries to put others off from committing a similar crime in the future.

Christians accept deterrence as a punishment because it prevents further harm.

In Islamic (Shariah) law harsh punishments, such as cutting off the hand of a thief, acts as a deterrence to others.

Reformation

Tries to change offenders for the better. Involves therapy, education or training

Christians accept punishments that aim to reform, because it tries to help offenders and they will not offend again - "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

In Islamic (Shariah) law harsh punishments also aim to reform the offender. They will change their behaviour because they don't want the punishment.

Retribution

Society getting its own back on the offender for the crime committed

Some Christians accept punishment that seeks retribution. In the Old Testament it says "Punishment shall be... an eye for an eye..."

Many Muslim countries have the death penalty for murder, as it seeks retribution for the crime - "Take not life, which God has made sacred, except by way of justice and law".

Treatment of criminals

Corporal punishment

Punishing an offender by causing them physical pain

Most Christians do not agree with it because it does not help to reform the offender.

Some Christians accept it as a way of telling off children - "I will punish transgressions with the rod."

Islamic law allows it, and it is used freely in some Islamic countries - "If a woman or man is guilty of adultery, flog each of them 100 stripes."

Community service

Making an offender do unpaid work in the community as punishment for minor crimes, such as vandalism.

Christians generally agree with it, as it allows the offender to make up for their crimes - "If your brother sins rebuke him, if he repents forgive him."

Muslims may accept it as punishment for minor crimes, but it is not enough of a deterrent to protect society.

Prison

Keeping offenders separate from the rest of society for a set length of time

Christians generally accept it if the offender is given help to reform - "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

Muslims accept prisons as a way of protecting society, but they are not for reform.

Attitudes to the death penalty

Arguments for the death penalty

Murderers should pay with their life.

It acts as a deterrent.

Brings justice for victims and families.

Protects society from dangerous people.

Some Christians accept it because the Old Testament says "Punishment shall be... an eye for an eye..."

In Islam it is allowed - "Take not life, which God has made sacred, except by way of justice and law".

Utilitarianism argues that the morally best action is the one that makes the most overall happiness. Executing those who have committed violent crimes brings happiness to the victim's families and to society.

Arguments against the death penalty

Killing a murderer is a contradiction.

Murder still happens in countries with it, so it does not act as a deterrent

It is inhumane and degrading to keep somebody on death row.

Most Christians disagree with it because it does not give the chance for reform - "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

It breaks one of the Ten Commandments - "Do not murder."

It goes against the sanctity of life.

Capital punishment

Putting a prisoner to death as a punishment

Death penalty

Putting a prisoner to death as a punishment

Justice

Bringing about what is fair and making up for a

Punishment

Something negative done to somebody found guilty

Sanctity of life

All life is holy as it created and loved by God

Shariah law

Islamic law, based on teachings in the Qur'an

Theme E - Crime and punishment

Ethical issues

Forgiveness

Christian attitudes to forgiveness

Christians should forgive those who have done them wrong, as well as expecting a fair punishment to be given - "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Seventy- seven times." Jesus meant there was no number of the times someone should be forgiven.

Anthony Walker was killed in a racist attack in 2005. His mother and sister, both Christians, forgave his killers and continue to practice forgiveness for them every day.

Some Christians, who have been victims of a very serious crime do not see a way to forgive because they believe that only the person directly affected by the crime can forgive. They seek justice instead.

Islamic attitude to forgiveness

In Islam, forgiveness is a quality of Allah. Forgiveness is also conditional. A human must be sorry, recognise the wrong, commit to not repeat it, and seek forgiveness. Without these conditions, forgiveness cannot be given.

On the day of judgement Allah will show forgiveness and mercy to those who show mercy and forgiveness to their fellow humans. - "If a person forgives and makes reconciliation, his reward is due from God."

Tariq Khamisa was shot and killed in 1995. His father, Azim, set up a foundation that is committed to "stopping children from killing children". Azim turned to his faith, and through prayer he was able to forgive his son's 14 year old killer.

Good and evil intentions

Christian explanations for evil

Evil is the abuse of the free will God gave humans, allowing them to choose right from wrong.

Some humans choose to perform evil actions and commit crimes.

In order to be able to see and appreciate good, evil has to exist.

Most Christians believe in a figure called the devil, an evil power. The devil tries to tempt and encourage humans to behave badly.

Evil is a combination of internal and external factors.

Christians believe that having evil thoughts lead to evil actions, such as committing a crime. Avoiding sin and temptation steers Christians away from crime.

Islamic explanations for evil

The Qur'an says that there is a devil (Iblis) who was expelled from paradise.

The devil continually tempts and pushes humans to be wicked. Humans fail to show self-discipline and give in to Iblis' temptations.

Evil is a mix of a powerful evil being and the weakness of humans.

Avoiding sin and temptation steers Muslims away from crime.

Suffering

Christian attitudes to suffering

Christians should not deliberately cause suffering.

They should treat others with kindness and compassion and in the same way they would like to be treated - "Do to others what you would have them do to you."

Christians believe that those who cause suffering should say sorry for the suffering caused. If they break the law they should be punished fairly and with justice.

Islamic attitudes to suffering

Many Muslims believe that suffering can be caused by the selfishness and evil of human beings which leads to bad decisions.

Muslims should treat others with respect - "None of you believes until he wishes for his brother what he wishes for himself."

They can overcome suffering in their own lives and help to ease the suffering of others by following Allah's path.

Helping those suffering from crime

Victims and witnesses are supported by the justice system. They are offered emotional and practical support and practical tips to keep safe. There is specific support in certain areas, for example abuse or rape.

Christians and Muslims will support those suffering from crime, and organisations that help victims.

Evil

Something morally wrong that causes suffering

Free will

The ability of people to make decisions for themselves

Forgiveness

To stop holding someone's actions against them

Repentance

Being truly sorry for what you have done

Suffering

A feeling of pain, harm, distress, or hardship

Victim

The one who has a crime committed against them