

Theme A—Relationship and families

Marriage and divorce

Marriage

Christian attitudes to marriage

Marriage helps the stability of society and is blessed by God.

It is considered to be natural and is therefore expected of Christians - "This is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife and they become one flesh."

For Catholics, marriage is a sacrament that gives God's grace and reflects the sacrificial love of Jesus.

Christian marriage ceremony

The marriage ceremony reflects the importance of marriage and conveys God's blessing.

During the ceremony the couple make promises in front of God to love and care for each other until the end of their life, no matter what.

Sikh attitudes to marriage

Marriage is a religious act which helps help people experience God's love in their relationship.

Sikhs are expected to marry as God intended men and women to live that way - "They alone are called husband and wife, who have one light in two bodies."

Sikh marriage ceremony

The ceremony takes place in front of the Guru Granth Sahib, and special hymns and prayers are read.

Divorce

Divorce is acceptable if a last resort

Some Christians believe divorce is allowed if the lesser of two evils. It's accepted if staying married would cause more harm than divorcing, due to domestic violence or abuse, adultery, or addiction, and divorcing is the last resort.

For some Sikhs, civil divorce (legally dissolving the marriage) is allowed if differences cannot be resolved.

Divorce is never acceptable

For Catholics, God has joined the couple together so a civil divorce cannot dissolve a marriage - "No human being must separate what God has joined together."

Instead, the Church will offer support to couples who are having problems in their marriage.

Many Sikhs believe that marriage should be for life, and that promises that have been made cannot be broken.

Ethical arguments

Divorce is now accepted in general society, and religious people should respect that.

If divorce causes the least harm in a situation then it must be morally right.

Only a couple can decide what is right for them and any children they may have.

Remarriage after divorce

Remarriage after divorce is acceptable

In the Anglican Church, the area Bishop must give permission for a divorced person to remarry in a church.

Non-conformist Christians believe that the Church should reflect God's forgiveness and allow remarriages in church.

Although divorce is discouraged, Sikhs who have a civil divorce are allowed to marry again in the gurdwara.

Remarriage after divorce is never acceptable

As the Catholic Church does not recognise divorce, remarriage not allowed in church. Those who have a civil divorce are expected to remain celibate.

However, if the person has received an annulment they are allowed to remarry in church.

Many Christians believe that remarriage after divorce is adultery - "Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her."

Many Sikhs believe that marriage should be for life. Whilst they accept civil divorce as a last resort, it is generally believed that a person should not remarry if their former spouse is alive.

Annulment

When the Catholic Church rules that a marriage was never valid

Bigamy

The crime of marrying someone whilst married to another person

Celibacy

Abstaining from sexual relations

Monogamy

The state of being committed but unmarried

Non-conformist

An English Protestant who does not follow the standard practices of the Church of England

Sacrament

Rites and rituals where the believer receives God's love and support

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Sexuality

Sex before marriage and cohabitation

Sex before marriage and cohabitation is acceptable if part of a loving relationship

Some liberal Christians argue that it is a valid expression of love if couple are monogamous and intend to marry.

Sex before marriage and cohabitation is never acceptable

The Catholic Church teaches that sex is for procreation, therefore all sex outside marriage is wrong.

Many Christians believe that sex is part of a loving trusting relationship and should only happen in marriage - "The sexual act must take place exclusively within marriage. Outside of marriage it constitutes a grave sin."

Any form of sex outside marriage is wrong - "Flee from sexual immorality"

For Khalsa Sikhs having sex before marriage breaks the Code of Conduct.

Sex before marriage brings bad karma - "For a moment of sexual pleasure, you shall suffer in pain for millions of days."

Adultery

Strongly disagree with adultery

Christianity strongly disagrees with adultery. It involves secrecy, lies and a betrayal of trust.

Christians disagree with adultery because it breaks the promises made before God during their wedding - "forsaking all others, be faithful as long as you both shall live."

Adultery also breaks one of the Ten Commandments - "Do not commit adultery"

Jesus taught that lust, which could lead to adultery, is also wrong - "Anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart."

Sikhism also strongly disagrees with adultery. Adultery breaks the sacred bond of marriage, betrays trust and brings shame on the family - "The blind fool abandons the wife of his own home, and has an affair with another woman."

For Khalsa Sikhs adultery breaks the Code of Conduct.

Adultery brings bad karma - "For a moment of sexual pleasure, you shall suffer in pain for millions of days."

Using artificial contraception

Acceptable to use artificial contraception for family planning in marriage

The Church of England teaches that artificial contraception can be used to ensure couples only have as many children as they can care for - "Other methods may be used, provided that this is done in the light of Christian principles."

Anglican and Non-conformist Christians believe that contraception enables couples to develop their relationship before having children, or to space out pregnancies to avoid harming the mother's health.

Some Christians only accept contraception that prevents the egg being fertilised, as they believe that once conception happens then human life should be protected.

Many Sikhs accept the use of artificial contraception for family planning as it is morally responsible behaviour.

Never acceptable to use artificial contraception

Many Christians believe that children are a blessing from God, and should not be prevented - "Be fruitful and multiply"

The Catholic Church teaches that using artificial contraception is sinful because the couple are preventing God's plan - "Every sexual act should have the possibility of creating new life."

For many Sikhs, using contraception shows that sex is giving into lust, which is one of the five evils - "Those who are tempted by sexual delights are corrupt."

Adultery

Voluntary sexual intercourse between a married person and a person they are not

Cohabitation

Living together and having a sexual relationship before marriage

Family planning

Controlling how many and when a couple has children

Human sexuality

How people express themselves as sexual beings

Monogamy

Practice of having one spouse or committed partner at the same time

Procreation

Having children

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Homosexuality

Attitudes to homosexuality

Those in same-sex relationships should be accepted

Liberal Christians believe that Jesus taught acceptance and that includes of gay people and their relationships - "Love your neighbour"

Quakers believe that "the quality and depth of feeling between two people is the most important part of a living relationship, not their gender or sexual orientation." Genesis says that all people were created in the image of God, which includes gay people.

Sikhs believe that everyone should be treated with respect, regardless of their sexual orientation. Even if homosexual relationships are not accepted, gay people should be accepted and treated with respect and without discrimination.

Considers same-sex sexual acts and relationships as a sin

The Catholic Church teaches that homosexual sex is a sin and separates people from God. Gay Christians should remain celibate to avoid sinful acts - "You shall not lie with a male as with a female; it is an abomination."

The Guru Granth Sahib does not mention homosexuality and does encourage heterosexual marriage. For many Sikhs this is a sign that homosexual acts are wrong.

For some Sikhs, the instruction to avoid lust applies to homosexual acts as they can never be for procreation.

Same- sex marriage

Civil same- sex marriage is accepted

Whilst same-sex marriages are not legally performed in churches in England, Anglican vicars are allowed to bless civil marriages, if they think it is appropriate.

Anglican vicars are allowed to be in a civil partnership if they remain celibate, but are not allowed to be married.

Quakers have long supported same- sex marriage, campaigning for it to be made legal and recognising civil partnerships as equal to marriage. For Quakers it is the quality and depth of feeling that is the most important part of a relationship.

Same- sex marriage is never accepted

For the Church of England and the Catholic Church marriage remains between one man and one woman, and therefore same- sex marriage is not accepted.

Same- sex marriages cannot legally be performed in a church by a priest.

Anglican priests are not allowed to have same- sex marriages, as it goes against Church Law.

The Guru Granth Sahib encourages heterosexual marriage. Same-sex marriage is not mentioned, therefore many Sikhs believe it is a sin.

Same- sex parents

Same- sex parenting is accepted

Many non-religious people accept same-sex couples can be parents because they believe that it is more important for children to grow up in a secure, loving environment, and the gender of those parents is not important.

Some Christians accept homosexuality and same-sex relationships, and therefore accept same- sex parenting.

Same-sex parenting is not accepted

Some Christians do not accept homosexuality and therefore do not accept same- sex parents. They say the ideal is for children to grow up with male and female role-models as parents.

They also argue that, because same- sex parents are unable to conceive naturally and have to use IVF and artificial insemination, they are playing God.

Celibacy

Abstaining from sexual relations

Genesis

The first book of the Bible, which sets out the story of

Homosexuality

Sexual attraction to members of the same sex

Lust

Strong or uncontrolled sexual desire

Marriage

A legal union between two people as partners in a

Quakers

A Christian movement devoted to peace and

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Families and gender equality

Nature and purpose of families

The nature of families

A nuclear family is one that contains mother, father and children. This is the ideal for Christians, and Sikhs - "The householders assert their faith in family life"

An extended family involves grandparents and other relatives living together. In Biblical times this is how families lived together, and Christians are reminded to "Honour your father and your mother."

A single parent family is one where one parent brings up their children alone.

The purpose of families

For Catholics the purpose of the family is procreation - "Go forth and multiply".

Families should also give stability, providing a secure, stable environment for children.

For both Christians and Sikhs, the family should be a way of bringing children up in the faith.

The Catholic Church describes parenting and the family as "here one learns endurance and the joy of work, love, generous - and even repeated forgiveness, and above all divine worship in prayer and the offering of one's life.

Sikh parents will also bring their child up in their faith. The Code of Conduct says "It is a Sikh's duty to get his children educated in Sikhism."

Polygamy

Christian arguments against polygamy

Polygamy is illegal in most countries, including the UK. Being legally married to more than one person at once is bigamy, which is against the law.

The Church of England only accepts marriage between one man and one woman.

The New Testament regularly says that a man should have one wife, e.g. "Let none of you be faithless to the wife of your youth."

Genesis says that a man shall "be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh." which shows marriage is between two people.

Fundamentalist LDS arguments in favour of polygamy

The LDS Church traditionally taught that polygamous marriages ensured a place in heaven. All wives, and their children, should be loved and treated equally

Polygamy was stopped by the LDS in 1890, but some members continue to practice it today.

It is argued that there are many references to Polygamy in the Old Testament, and at one point it says "If a man has two wives..." showing it was practiced.

Proponents say that it prevents adultery in marriage, and that monogamy goes against human nature.

Gender equality in families

Men and women have equal roles in the family

Many Christians believe that marriage is an equal partnership where the different gifts of each person strengthen family life.

Jesus treated women with respect, welcomed them as disciples. St Paul emphasised this when he wrote "Nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ."

Men and women will divide the roles equally, according to their gifts and skills. Many modern Christian women do not promise in their marriage vows to obey their husbands, as is traditional.

Within Sikhism men and women are considered equal and often share responsibilities within the family.

Men and women have separate roles in the family

Many traditional Christians say that men are the head of the family, and therefore earn money to support the family, and women should care for the children - "with painful labour you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband and he will rule over you."

"Quiverfull families" are a small movement of Christians who follow these traditional roles, often having many children - "Children are indeed a heritage from the Lord, and the fruit of the womb is His reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are children born in one's youth. Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them."

Bigamy

The crime of marrying someone while married to another person

Monogamy

Practice of having one spouse or committed partner at the same time

LDS

Latter Day Saints; a Christian denomination founded in 1830

Procreation

Having children

Polygamy

Practice of having more than one wife at the same time

Stability

Safety and security