

## Good & evil actions and intentions

Some people suggest that those who commit the worst crimes are evil.

**But where does evil come from?**

**Christianity:** Evil is seen as the abuse of the **free will** God gave to humans. In order to be able to appreciate good, then evil has to exist. Most Christians believe in a figure called **the devil** or Satan. So, evil is a combination of internal and external factors.

## Suffering

For many people, suffering is an unfortunate part of living. It may be caused by something natural, such as an illness, or it may be due to how people have behaved. Whatever the cause, Christians believe they should try to help others who are suffering.

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

**Heller Keller** was a Christian writer and activist who became deaf and blind when she was only 19 months old. She said **"We are never really happy until we try to brighten the lives of others"**.

**'TASK** We also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance, character and hope' (New Testament, Romans)  
What does this quote teach Christians?

Explain how a Christian might answer the question:  
**'Why does God allow people to suffer?'**

# Theme E: Crime & Punishment

## Reasons for crime & types of crime

**Causes** of crime include: upbringing, mental illness, poverty, opposition to existing laws, greed/hate, or addiction.

There are 4 key **types** of crimes: Crimes against the **person** (e.g. murder); Crimes against **property** (e.g. burglary); Crimes against the **state** (e.g. terrorism) and **Religious offences** (e.g. blasphemy)

**St Paul** tells Christians to **"obey the laws of the land."**

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

## 3 aims of punishment

**Retribution:** is the least positive of the 3 aims of punishment. It means that society, on behalf of the victim, is getting its own back on the offender. In the Old Testament it is referred to as *lex talionis* (the law of retaliation). **"An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth."**

**Deterrence:** This is the belief that if offenders are seen to be punished for wrongdoing, then this may 'put off' others from committing that offence. The offender themselves might also be put off from reoffending.

**Reformation:** This is the aim of punishment most Christians prefer because it seeks to help offenders by working with them to help them understand that their behaviour is harming society. It is hoped that offenders will change their attitudes and become responsible, law-abiding members of the community.

## Treatment of criminals

Christians do not disagree with discipline. They see a positive need for it: **"He who spares the rod hates their children, but the one who loves their children is careful to discipline them"**.

However, they may question the method used since Jesus' teachings on love and caring for people rule out any physical punishment. Instead, Christians focus on positive sanctions that help offenders to realise the error of their ways and reform. Jesus always treated people with respect, and Christians believe they should follow his example.

## The death penalty

Abolished in the UK in 1965 and is now illegal in many EU countries.

**The sanctity of life** = God gave life, so only He has the right to take it away.  
\*\*\*Some Christians support capital punishment. They quote the Old Testament **"an eye for an eye"**. So if you kill someone you should be killed.

| FOR  | AGAINST   |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>It is a justifiable retribution for serious crimes</li><li>It is a deterrent</li><li>It gives the victim's family a sense of justice</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Only God has the right to take life</li><li>Jesus taught a message of love and forgiveness</li><li>It is hypocritical</li></ul> |

## Forgiveness

Forgiveness is a core Christian belief and one Jesus emphasised in his teachings.

Christians are expected to be forgiving towards those who wrong them, if they expect to be forgiven themselves: **"Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us"**.

Many Christians would argue that forgiveness is not a replacement for punishment.

During his ministry Jesus was asked how many times you should forgive someone who wrongs you and he replied **"I tell you not seven times, but seventy-seven times"**

# Theme E: Crime & Punishment

## Religious beliefs on Corporal Punishment

### Christian views about Corporal punishment

- It goes against the **'sanctity of life'** because it causes damage
- **'Eye for an eye'**
- It's against Jesus' teachings of **'love thy neighbour'**
- No Christian country in the developed world uses it to punish criminals

**Hate crime:** crimes, often including violence, that are usually targeted at a person because of their race, religion, sexuality, gender or disability.

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

**"Love thy neighbour."**

Explain what the quotes above teach Christians? Link this to hate crimes.

## Religious beliefs on Community Service

- Good for minor offences because it allows **REFORM**
- HELPS them 'make up' for what they've done'
- CoE said it was a good thing as it helps with drug problems/medical issues and gives education and counselling too.
- Better than locking people up
- Hear the victim's side – **'love thy neighbour'**.

| Other key aims of punishment | Definition | Example |
|------------------------------|------------|---------|
| Protection                   |            |         |
| Vindication                  |            |         |
| Reparation                   |            |         |

## Religious beliefs on Prison

### Christian view:

- Accept it for serious offences
- Want it to be used to educate and **REFORM** prisoners
- Want them to get **support, counselling, drug therapies, education while inside.**

## Exam practice

Give TWO different cause of crime. [2 marks]

Explain TWO contrasting beliefs in contemporary British society about corporal punishment. In your answer you should refer to the main religious tradition of Great Britain and one or more other religious tradition. [4 marks]

Explain TWO religious beliefs about forgiveness. Refer to scripture or sacred writings in your answer. [5 marks]

Explain TWO religious beliefs about hate crime. Refer to scripture or sacred writings in your answer. [5 marks]

Religious believers should never agree with the death penalty. Evaluate this statement. [12 marks]

## Attitudes to lawbreakers

- Christians believe the law should be respected
- Offenders must be punished by the law according to the seriousness of the crime
- Offenders have basic rights so should not be given a punishment that is inhumane/harmful.
- Through their punishment they should be helped to become a useful member of society so that they do not re-offend.

The **Parable of the Sheep and Goats** makes it clear that helping prisoners is helping Jesus:

**"I was in prison and you came to visit me." Matthew 25: 34-36**