

Marriage & Family

Christian Marriage	The joining together of a man and woman who make vows to each other in front of God,
Sanctity of marriage	Marriage is holy and blessed by God
Cohabitation	Living together before marriage
Homosexuality	Sexual attraction to someone of the same gender
Heterosexuality	Sexual attraction to someone of a different gender
Adultery	Having sex with someone who is not your husband or wife
Pre-marital sex	Having sex before marriage
Celibacy	Making a promise to not have sex
Divorce	The legal ending of a marriage (Roman Catholics do not accept divorce)
Annulment	A declaration from the Catholic church that a marriage was never a true marriage and is therefore void and cancelled; the partners are free to marry again
Contraception	Methods or items that prevent pregnancy. Condoms, contraceptive pill and implant are artificial contraceptives that aim to prevent pregnancy. Rhythm method is a natural contraception that aims to prevent pregnancy.
Gender discrimination	Treating people differently because of their gender
Procreation	Having children
Nuclear family	Two biological parents + children
Single-parent family	One biological parent + children
Same-sex family	Two parents of the same gender + children
Extended family	A family that includes a larger number and wider variety of relatives
Blended family	Two adults, each with their own children, living together as one family
Parish	An area of land around a local church or several churches
Vicar	The priest who is responsible for a church in a parish
Rites of passage	"Milestones" in a Christian's life, e.g. baptism, confirmation, marriage
Sacrament	A special promise to or ceremony before God
Catholic Catechism	A book that outlines all of the key teachings of the Catholic church
Humanae Vitae	A book published by the Catholic church, which makes it clear that artificial forms of contraception are not acceptable to Catholic Christians
Monogamy	Being married to or in a relationship with one person at a time
Promiscuity	Having a number of different sexual partners; "sleeping around"
Chastity	Waiting until you are married to have sex



Marriage

Essential information: Marriage is the legal union of two people in a relationship. In the UK is seen by many as an important foundation for family life. Christianity places great significance on the sanctity of marriage, as a gift from God. Many non religious people also believe marriage is important but do not think it has any religious significance.

Christian beliefs about marriage

- The sanctity of marriage is important. This is the idea that marriage is special because it is a **holy gift from God**
- for Catholics marriage is a **sacrament**
- The Bible teaches that marriage is between a man and a woman. For this reason, some Christians may be against same-sex marriage
- Marriage is an exclusive loving relationship in which faithfulness is important
- A marriage involves the whole community, which promises to support the married couple throughout their life together



Mark 10 6-3 in the Bible reflects a number of Christian beliefs on marriage:

"But at the beginning of creation God made them male and female. "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh, So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together let no one separate."

God intended and planned for man and women to marry

Marriage creates a unity that is both physical and emotional

A marriage becomes the most important relationship in someone's life

The couple are joined together by God and this cannot be broken (e.g. through divorce)



Homosexuality

In the UK, attitudes to homosexuality and same-sex marriage have changed in recent years and since 2014 same-sex couples have been able to get married.

Religious and non-religious views on homosexual relationships vary:

Traditional Catholic teachings

- Homosexual sex is wrong; the Bible teaches sex should be between a man and a woman.
- The Bible also teaches that sexual immorality is a sin against God. 1 Corinthians 6: 20 teaches Christians to 'honour God with your bodies'

Other Christian beliefs

- Homosexual sex within committed and loving homosexual relationships is acceptable
- But some would still say that marriage should still be reserved for a man and woman.

Humanists

- Same-sex relationships are fine as long as the relationship does not cause any harm to those involved.
- Personal choice and freedom are important, including the freedom to be in a same-sex relationship.

Atheists

- Many atheists accept same-sex relationships.
- Some may oppose them for social or cultural reasons.



Cohabitation

Cohabitation means living together in a sexual relationship without being married. In the UK today about half of all couples cohabit, some of whom plan to get married in the future whereas others will cohabit for their entire relationship. Some Christians are against cohabitation.

Sexual Relationships—Christian beliefs



Belief	Reason for belief	Alternative views
Sex should be for procreation (having children)	In Genesis God commanded people to procreate. Natural Law suggests this is the purpose of sex.	Many Christians see sex as a gift from God, which is also for pleasure and to bring a couple closer together
Sex should only take place within marriage	Sex is the highest expression of love between a couple and requires the commitment of marriage	Some Christians believe sex before marriage is acceptable, however should be reserved for committed relationships.
Adultery (having sex with someone other than your marriage partner) is wrong	Adultery is forbidden by the Ten Commandments. It breaks the trust between a couple.	Christianity will not accept adultery, but some non-religious people accept adultery if it does not cause physical or emotional harm to anyone involved.

Families



Essential information: there are five main family types with 21st century society—nuclear, same-sex, extended, single parent, blended (in keywords). Having a family is an important purpose of marriage for many Christians. Christians believe that children are a gift from God, and should be brought up in a secure and loving environment.

Christians have divergent views on types of families:

Christians who follow traditional teaching and disapprove of same-sex relationships believe that children should grow up in nuclear families, with a male and female role model.	Many Christian churches have become more understanding of different family types and aim to welcome everyone into the church life.
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Purpose of family according to Christian teaching:

- **Procreation**—an important purpose of marriage, children are a gift from God
- **Education**—the family is where children learn morality, religious laws and practices, learn respect and faith; "Bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord." (Ephesians 6:4)
- **Security**—family provides a safe and stable environment to bring up children. Christians believe all children should have this security so may support charities that help vulnerable children.



Contraception

Essential information: Family planning means choosing when to have children. This can be controlled by using contraception (artificial and natural methods of preventing pregnancy) Christian and non-religious views on contraception vary.



Divergent views on contraception:

The Catholic Church:

- The use of artificial contraception is wrong as it goes against God's command to 'be fruitful and increase in number.'
- Sex should always be open to the possibility of conception, and artificial contraception prevents this
- Natural methods such as the rhythm method are acceptable as a way of helping a couple control when they have children. These teachings are confirmed in the Papal Encyclical Humanae Vitae, issued by Pope Paul in 1968



Church of England and other Christian views:

- approve of the use of contraception to aid responsible family planning, but not to encourage promiscuous behaviour

Non-religious views:

- Most non-religious people, including Humanists and atheists, accept the use of contraception
- Many argue that deciding whether or not to use contraception is a personal choice, provided it does not cause any harm to those involved
- Many argue that contraception leads to fewer unwanted pregnancies, and allows women to have greater control over their lives



Making ethical choices

Situation ethics is an ethical theory that states that moral decisions should be based on what is the most loving thing to do in any particular situation.

Someone who follows this might be in favour of contraception in one situation and against it in another, depending on whether they believe it helps or harms those involved. In contrast Christians tend to make decisions based on Church teachings the Bible, and their own conscience. Some may apply one rule to all situations (e.g. artificial contraception is always wrong), while others may take a more flexible approach (e.g. 'artificial contraception is acceptable to control the size of a family, but not to prevent children altogether.)



Divorce

Essential information: A divorce is the legal ending of a marriage. Christianity teaches that marriage should be a lifelong union for this on many. Christians are against divorce, although some accept it when a relationship can be saved. Non-religious people tend to be more accepting of divorce.



What does the Bible say?

Christian teachings

In Mark's Gospel Jesus appears to forbid divorce (Mark 10:11)

In Matthew's Gospel Jesus appears to allow divorce in cases of unfaithfulness- 'anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery'

These two teachings help to explain why Christians have different opinions about divorce

	The Catholic Church	The Protestant Church
Is divorce accepted?	No, The marriage vows are a covenant (agreement) before God, so cannot be broken	Yes, God accepts that people make mistakes and relationships sometimes real down
What about remarriage?	Divorced Catholics are not allowed to remarry in a Catholic Church	Divorced people can remarry in a protestant church if the local clergy agree to it
Are there exceptions?	An annulment is sometimes allowed in certain circumstances such as if the couple were forced to marry or were underage when they got married This effectively says that the marriage never took place	More conservative protestants disapprove of divorce and remarriage

Equality of men and women in the family

Essential information: Most Christians believe that men and women are equal as they are both made in the image of God. Many Christians believe that men and women are suited to different roles. Some Christians believe that the husband should be the head of the family.



Christian Belief	Supporting passages in the Bible
Most Christians believe that men and women are equal	Genesis 1, man and woman are both created in the image of God, and both are given authority to rule over the rest of creation
Many Christians believe that although men and women have equal worth they have different roles	Ephesians 5:22-33 suggests that men and women have different roles in a marriage. A wife should 'submit' to her husband, and a husband should 'love' his wife
Some Christians believe that men are superior to women	In Genesis 2, man is created first. The woman is created as a helper for him. In Genesis 3, the woman disobeys God first by eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. She then appears to tempt the man to also disobey God

Christian views on gender equality

Most Christian Churches emphasize the importance of gender equality. Some **Churches** also teach that men and women are suited to different (but equally important) roles. For example, the Catholic Church teaches that within the family, the mother's role is to look after the home and children, while the father's role is to go out to work in order to provide for his family. **Some Christians** think the husband should be the head of the family, and his authority should be respected by the wife. More **liberal Christians** disagree with the idea of gendered roles and believe it is not necessary to have a head of the family.

Support for the family in the local parish

Essential information: many Christian churches believe it is important to provide support for parents and their children. They do this by offering a range of groups, services, and rites of passage that welcome families into the church.



Children are an important part of the Christian community, this is shown in the Bible when Jesus disciples try to send away the children who have been brought to Jesus to receive his prayers Jesus disagrees with his disciples.

PARISH - THE AREA AROUND A LOCAL CHURCH

	Sunday school	Classes for parents	Counselling	Rites of passage	Matthew 19:13-14
How does the Parish offer this service?	Sunday school is a Christian school which caters for children and other young people. It often happens during usual Sunday services.	Classes offered by the church to prepare parents with the journey ahead with their new baby.	The chance to talk through things that are concerning you. The counsellor helps you to do this by listening to you, not by giving you advice.	A rite of passage is a "milestone" in a Christians life e.g. baptism, confirmation, marriage.	Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."
Why is it important to families?	Its aimed to teach young people an understanding of the Bible, taught in a way they understand	To help them learn effective parenting and how to raise children with Christian morals.	"Get things off their chest", "find a new perspective", and "see things in a new way".	A chance to understand, appreciate and celebrate the moment with God's blessings.	

Gender Prejudice and discrimination

Essential information: Gender prejudice and discrimination result in men or women being treated unfairly because of their gender. Christian teachings oppose gender prejudice and discrimination. However, there is still controversy over whether women should be allowed to take on positions of authority within the Church.



Gender prejudice is when judgements are made about men and women on the basis of their gender. Eg an employer assumes that women are emotionally weaker than men.	Gender discrimination happens when someone acts on their prejudice. E.g. an employer doesn't appoint a woman because he assumes she is too weak to handle the pressure
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Christian teachings

Various teachings in the Bible are used by Christians to oppose gender prejudice and discrimination:

- in Galatians, Paul teaches Christians that men and women are equal, saying you are all one in Christ Jesus



- Jesus treats men and women with equal respect. His female followers are important to him, and there are examples where he shows kindness to women who have been treated badly by others. For example he heals a sick woman who had been cast out by her community.

Ordination of women

The Church of England agreed to allow women to become priests in 1994 and to become bishops in 2014. The Catholic Church does not ordain women.

Arguments for: it is discriminatory. Women have different skills to offer the church. Women may be able to deal more sensitively with issues.

Arguments against: in the Bible Paul says "I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man". Jesus chose only men to be the 12 disciples.