

GCSE Philosophy and Ethics – Relationships revision notes

Key concepts:

(A questions – you must have definition & example)

Adultery

Voluntary sexual intercourse between a married person and a person who is not their spouse. Many Christians teach against adultery, as it breaks the vow 'till death do us part'.

Divorce

To legally end a marriage. Some Muslims believe that divorce is acceptable, but should be a last resort.

Cohabitation

To live together in a sexual relationship, without being married or in a civil partnership. Some Christians believe that this is wrong as sex should only take place within marriage.

Commitment

A sense of dedication and obligation to do something. In a Christian marriage ceremony, commitments are made during the vows.

Contraception

Methods used to prevent a woman from becoming pregnant during or following sexual intercourse. Roman Catholics teach against its use as they believe every sperm is sacred.

Gender equality

People of all genders enjoying the same rights and opportunities in all aspects of their lives. Christians believe that we are all equal as we are made in God's image.

Responsibilities

Actions/duties that you are expected to carry out. For example, Christians believe you have the responsibility to teach your children about God.

Roles

Position, status or function of a person in society, as well as the characteristics and social behaviour expected of them. For example, a parent as the role to care for their children.

Different types of families in today's society:

Nuclear Family: Most common type of family in modern Britain – consists of 2 parents & one of more children living together.

Single Parent Family: Where one parent raises one or more children alone. The number of single parent families has continued to rise in Britain as a result of increasing divorce rates.

Extended Family: A number of adults and children who are related living in the same home. For example, cousins, aunts, uncles and grandparents living together and sharing in family roles.

Childless Family: Where a married or co-habiting couple are either unable to have children naturally or decide not to have children. Same-sex couples are often a childless family.

Reconstituted Family: Some divorced adults chose to remarry or live in a co-habiting relationship, leading to a reconstituted family. This is made up of a mix of step-parents and step-children.

The purpose of family life:

Christianity

The family is still thought to be the basis of Western society and most Christians believe that children should be brought up in a loving and supportive family. The Church should be a model of family life, with members of the Church united like a family. Most Christians believe that the best foundation for the family is marriage, and the ideal family unit is a nuclear family. This is because they believe children are a 'Gift from God', and that parents have the responsibility to care for them properly and to teach them how to live and to accept authority.

Further, many believe that it is within the home where religious belief should be 'taught' and where religious beliefs and teachings are lived out. Most religious believers believe it is their duty to share their faith with their children and teach them important values. For example, teaching them the 10 commandments, taking them to places of worship and teaching them when and how to pray. In return, children are expected to respect their parents and to obey them until they are adults themselves.

'Honour your father and your mother' (Exodus 20:12).

'The family is the community in which, from childhood, one can learn moral values, begin to honour God and make good use of freedom' (Catechism of the Catholic Church)

'Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.' Proverbs 22:6.

Islam

In the past, Islam held a traditional view of the role of men and women in family life: The woman's role is in the home, whilst the man's is in the working world. Often, men are regarded as protectors of women and families, and providers of financial support. Women are expected to have children and to fulfil the role of a wife and mother. However, although Muslims view men and women as having different roles, they are still viewed as equals.

Parents have a responsibility to care for their children physically and emotionally and their goal is for their children to grow into self-disciplined, independent adults. Parents are expected to teach their children right from wrong. Children are expected to respect their parents, as commanded within the Qur'an. In the Islamic world, caring for your parents in the most difficult time of their lives is considered a blessing and an opportunity for spiritual growth. It is not enough that we only pray for our parents, but we should act with limitless compassion, remembering that when we were helpless children, they preferred us to themselves. When Muslim parents reach old age, they are treated mercifully, with kindness and selflessness, therefore Muslims believe that the ideal family unit is an extended family.

"A man is the guardian of his family/household; a woman is the guardian of the husband's home and of his children" (Hadith)

"Your Lord has commanded that you be kind to your parents ...since they cared for you when you were small." (Quran, 17:23-24)

"Your Lord has commanded that you worship none but him, and that you be kind to your parents... and do not say to them a word of disrespect". (Qur'an 17: 23-24).

Humanists believe that children should make up their own minds about religion, so parents should not share their religious beliefs with them, as they think all children should have a free choice.

What happens in religious marriage ceremonies?

Christianity

Many chose to get married in a Church, as some believe marriage is a sacrament, meaning God blesses the marriage by the sending of grace to the married couple. During the service, the Father walks the bride down the aisle, symbolising that he is giving her over to the groom to look after her. Traditional vows are exchanged as a public demonstration of their commitment. An exchange of rings symbolises their eternal love and Prayers and hymns say thanks to God and ask for his blessings on their marriage. Most Christians believe that marriage is a gift from God and is the right atmosphere to engage in sexual relations and to build a family life. It is a rite of passage, and marks a stage in a couple's status and an important stage in their lives.

Islam

A Muslim marriage usually takes place in the home or the Mosque and the couple give their consent before a minimum of two witnesses. The Nikah is read - The bride and groom sign 3 copies to show that they have agreed to the marriage. The contract also specifies the mahr; a payment made to the bride which is hers to keep and use as she wishes. Readings from the [Qur'an](#) ask for Allah's blessings. Prayers wish them wealth, long life and many children and there may be a feast called a walimah, which declares their marriage publically. Marriages in Islam are often **arranged**, but these can only take place with the consent of both parties. If someone was forced to marry then the marriage would be **invalid**. Marriage in Islam is vitally important and celibacy is not encouraged, as Muhammad stated to not delay marriage. Further, marriage in Islam is considered the ideal for having a family and can act as a combat against sexual immorality.

What is the nature (what something is like) and purpose (What somethings function is) of marriage?

For Christians and Muslims, marriage is the basis of family life. It is regarded as God-given, a life-long commitment and the best basis for creating an environment into which children should be born. Further, it creates a loving, spiritual bond between a man and a women.

“Marriage is a union permanent and lifelong, for better or worse, till death do us part, of one man with one woman, for the procreation and nurture of children, for the right direction of the natural instincts and affections, and for help and comfort which one ought to have of the other” Church of England Synod.

“But at the beginning of creation God made them male and Female. For this reason a man will leave his mother and father and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” (Mark 10: 6-8)

“And of His Signs is that He has created mates for you from your own kind that you may find peace in them and He has set between you love and mercy.” (Qur'an 30:21)

Humanists view marriage as a significant part of life and understand why a couple may want a special ceremony to show their commitment. A humanist ceremony would include no religious aspect, but reflect the important nature of marriage and significance for the couple.

REMEMBER: USE YOUR BOOKS TO REVISE ARRANGED MARRIAGE ALSO ☺

Marrying outside religious traditions:

In a pluralistic society (where many religions are present), inter-faith marriage is an issue that many religions must respond to. There are various problem - for example:

- In a Christian Orthodox tradition, a marriage in Church only takes place if an Orthodox Christian is marrying a baptised Christian.
- In the Catholic tradition, the partner who is not Catholic must agree to any children being allowed to follow the Catholic faith.
- Where there are issues, it is possible to have a civil ceremony (non-religious), followed by a religious blessing.

The following issues are also raised by inter-faith marriages:

- How can religious dietary laws be followed at home?
- Which religion should the children be raised as?
- What should children be told about the afterlife?
- What if there are different expectations in gender roles?

Adultery:

Christianity

Adultery is wrong because marriage is sexually exclusive and should not be shared with anyone else. Further, the 10 commandments forbid adultery. As marriage is seen as a sacrament and gift from God, adultery goes against this and destroys the special relationship between a husband and wife. Also, adultery can harm the family unit and cause the partner to feel cheated and betrayed. However, in the New Testament, Jesus forgave the women who committed adultery.

“You shall not commit adultery”. (Exodus 20:14)

*Jesus said: ““You have heard that it was said, ‘**You shall not commit adultery.**’ But I tell you that anyone who **looks at a woman lustfully** has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”*

Islam

Adultery is wrong because sex outside of marriage is strongly disapproved of. Marriage is a life-long union based on trust, morality and devotion. Further, adultery is seen as harmful to society, so against unity and peace of the ummah. Adultery is seen as a form of the worst possible theft and often in some Islamic countries it has been punishable by stoning.

“And do not approach unlawful sexual intercourse – it is immoral and evil” (Qur’an 17.32)

Cohabitation:

Christianity

Some Christians disagree with Cohabitation as they believe it devalues the special and sacred nature of sex, which should only take place within marriage. For example, the Catholic Church believe this and expect a couple to not have sex before marriage. Some Baptist Churches may refuse to marry a couple who are co-habiting. However, some more liberal Church of England denominations have an increasing tolerant view on cohabitation and accept it, as long as it is part of a committed relationship. But, they still view marriage first as ideal.

Islam

Although in practice some may choose to cohabit, according to Muslim teachings it is wrong. Muslims believe that for a couple to live together in a sexual relationship they must be married first. In cohabitation, you are more likely to be tempted to have sex outside of marriage which is considered a sin.

Divorce:

Christianity

There is no single viewpoint on divorce. The **Catholic Church** does not accept divorce, as they consider the bond of marriage to be a sacred bond, that is based on life-long love, fidelity (faithful/loyal) and family. They believe divorce is wrong because Jesus said *'Anyone who divorces his wife... and marries another commits adultery.'* This is because they believe adultery is a sin and view marriage as a sacrament (given by God) and therefore, *"What God has joined together, let no one separate"*. Roman Catholics will, on occasion, allow an annulment. However, this would require special permission, for example, the marriage may have been forced.

The Church of England does not encourage divorce, but it has the structure to help and sympathise with those who find themselves in such a situation. Some might argue that although Jesus is against divorce, times have changed and divorce is now more acceptable. The Church of England teaches that marriage is for life, however they also recognise that humans make mistakes and relationships can break down. Therefore, in some circumstances, divorce might need to be an option. For example, some argue that in the Bible, Jesus allowed divorce for adultery.

Islam

Divorce is sometimes acceptable as a last resort. It is expected that the family will try to help the couple overcome their problems. If the couple do decide to divorce then the husband must state on three separate occasions that the marriage is over. A period of three months begins (Iddah). The couple will stay in the same house but not sleep together. This ensures that there is no confusion about who is the father of any children born after the divorce. The woman would also be given her dowry back.

Humanists believe that marriage and family breakdown is best avoided and people should work out their difficulties, especially if children are involved. But, they recognise sometimes that isn't possible and believe that we only have this life so it should be enjoyed to the full. If you are unhappy, it is acceptable to divorce.

Re-marriage:

Church of England – allows that there are circumstances in which a divorced person may be married in church while the ex husband/wife is still alive, for example, for adultery or abuse or if the person wasn't the cause of the split. It is up to individual ministers to decide whether or not they are willing to perform such a marriage service. Some will not perform second marriages but will give a blessing after a registry office ceremony.

Roman Catholic Church – as this church does not accept divorce – ***'what God has joined together let no man put asunder'***, it doesn't accept remarriage in church either. A divorced person who has remarried may attend services, but cannot take part in Holy Communion. If a person remarries while their ex-partner is still alive, this is considered to be adultery.

Islam - A man and a woman can **remarry** twice, but after a third divorce remarriage to each other cannot take place unless the woman has been married to another man in the meantime. Marriage is seen as a social contract which Allah has sanctioned. But, as it is not seen as a sacrament it can be broken and divorce allowed. In fact being married is encouraged as family life is an ideal way of living. Polygamy is also allowed providing that all wives are treated equally.

Contraception:

Christianity

Roman Catholics do not believe in any artificial forms of birth control as sexual intercourse should always be open to the possibility of having children. They believe every sperm is sacred and look to the teaching from the Bible such as Genesis which states ***'Be fruitful and multiply.'*** Roman Catholics can use natural forms of contraception – rhythm method, withdrawal or abstain. Further, St Thomas Aquinas stated in his Natural Law that the continuation of species was important, so contraception is wrong as it prevents reproduction.

Other groups – Church of England, Methodist and Baptist believe contraception is acceptable providing both partners agree. They believe that family planning allows couples to have more opportunities for their relationships to develop – either with each other and or with their existing children.

Islam

The Quran has no direct teachings on contraception. However, many view Sex and children as a gift from God, so contraception is not desirable. However, it is accepted that contraception was used during the time of Muhammad so some Muslims believe in its use as long as it doesn't harm the body and both husband and wife are okay with it. Contraception is usually considered acceptable if the woman has ill health or the family are living in poverty to limit family size. Some couples do use artificial methods of contraception; the pill and condom are considered more acceptable than those which are difficult to reverse, such as vasectomy. However, contraception should never be used to encourage promiscuity (casual sex).

The purpose of sex:

Christian Attitude to sex before marriage

Sexual activity needs to be controlled and reserved for two people within the context of marriage. Christians are often encouraged to love one another in a non-sexual way. This type of love, sometimes called **'agape'**, is the love that Jesus showed to other people when he gave his life for them. Some

denominations, such as Roman Catholic do not believe sex before marriage is acceptable. Sex is seen as a gift from God and it is therefore sacred and holy. So they believe in chastity. All Christian denominations would be against casual sex (sleeping around) as this is an abuse of God's gift. Some Christian groups believe sex is acceptable before marriage if the couple are in love and in a permanent relationship. The majority of Christians believe that marriage is the most appropriate context for having sex.

Muslim Attitude to sex before marriage

Islam has very strict views on love and sex. These are based on passages from the *Qur'an* and Hadith (the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad). Muslims view sexual intercourse as an act of worship that fulfils emotional and physical needs as well as being procreative. Having children is the way in which humans can contribute towards Allah's creation. Sexual activity needs to be controlled and reserved for two people within the context of marriage. Polygamy is allowed, but sex outside this is not. Sexual intercourse is a gift from *Allah* and therefore can only take place within a married relationship. Islam encourages people to marry and not to lead *celibate* lives. Marriage places a responsibility on both the husband and the wife to meet each other's sexual needs.

"In the image of God he created them; male and female. God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it". (Genesis 1)

"That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh". (Genesis 2)

"When a husband and wife share intimacy it is rewarded and a blessing from Allah; just as they would be punished if they had engaged in illicit sex." (Qur'an)

**REMEMBER: USE YOUR BOOKS TO REVISE BELIEFS ABOUT SAME-SEX
REALTIONSIPS/MARRIAGES ALSO ☺**