

Theme 2 - Issues of Good and Evil - Crime and Punishment

- † What makes an act wrong? Relative and absolute morality, conscience, free will
- † Causes of crime and aims of punishment
- † Treatment of criminal, work of prison reformers and chaplains
- † Responses to the death penalty

Key Concepts

Good/Evil	Good is what is morally right and to our advantage; evil is considered immoral and wrong	Justice	Fairness; where everyone has equal opportunities
Forgiveness	Granting pardon for a wrongdoing	Free Will	Ability to make choices; nothing is predetermined
Conscience	Moral sense of right and wrong	Pacifism	War and violence can't be justified
Suffering	Pain or distress that can be physical or emotional	Morality	Principles determining right from wrong

Key Sources of Authority

'You shall not kill'- From the Ten Commandments - Exodus 20:13

Jesus taught that it was wrong to seek revenge and retribution. In Matthew 5 he taught that you should 'love your enemies' and that 'If someone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the left cheek also.'

Conscience

Key Quotes

'You are not a God that has pleasure in wickedness'
Psalm 5:4
'In the beginning God created heaven and earth'
Genesis 1:1
'In the image of God, He created him, male and female He created them' Genesis 1:27

What makes an act wrong?	There are two main forms of morality . Absolute morality refers to a principle that is never altered. Relative morality refers to principles that are changed according to situations. Christians believe in free will and humans have the ability to make moral or immoral choices. Often these choices are a result of conscience . For Christians deliberately going against the teachings of Jesus and other religious leaders would make an act a sin .
Causes of crime and aims of punishment	There are many different causes of crime and often they are the results of making poor or immoral choices. Punishment can have different aims such as justice (to show the importance of keeping the laws of the land), retribution (a form of revenge), deterrence (to try to stop others from committing the same crimes) and reformation (to educate the criminal to make moral choices).
Treatment of criminals, work of prison reformers and chaplains	Most Christians believe that God is the final judge . There have been many Christian prison reformers, e.g. Elizabeth Fry , who followed Jesus's teachings on forgiveness and believe there is something of God in everyone. Prison Chaplains help prisoners and their families in many practical and spiritual ways e.g. holding discussion groups, praying , offering advice on parole etc. They can support prisoners' families with pastoral and practical support.
Christian attitudes to the death penalty	Different interpretations of the Bible result in different views. Many of the same arguments are held for matters relating to sanctity of life such as abortion and euthanasia . Christians believe life was given by God and only He can take it away, so many disagree with the death penalty . They argue that one of the Ten Commandments forbids killing and refer to Jesus's teachings on forgiveness and not seeking revenge. Some Christians, however, do believe in the death penalty and refer to the Old Testament which states 'an eye for an eye'.

Exam Practice

What is meant by conscience? (2)

Describe the work of prison chaplains. (5)

Key Connections

Each area of study will connect with other areas in Christianity and other philosophical and ethical issues.

Consider how attitudes to the death penalty relate to **sanctity of life**.