

Beliefs & teachings: Christianity

NATURE OF GOD

Christianity is a **monotheistic** religion – they believe in **ONE** God.

Christians believe God is:

Omnipotent (*all powerful*)

Omniscient (*all knowing*)

Omnipresent (*everywhere*)

Benevolent (*loving*)

Transcendent (*beyond understanding*)

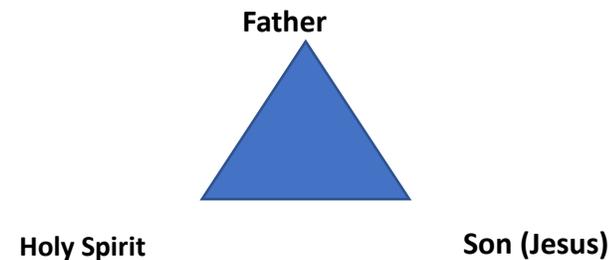
Immanent (*personal*)

Eternal (*no beginning and no end*)

Forgiving (*he will forgive sins*)

Key beliefs

HOLY TRINITY



<http://www.dormston.dudley.sch.uk/1297/school-closure-info>

The problem of evil

Evil exists

God is benevolent God is omnipotent

Moral evil = suffering caused by humans

Natural evil = suffering caused by nature

Responses:

1. Suffering is a **necessary** part of life
2. Suffering is **temporary**
3. Suffering is a punishment for **sin**
4. Suffering is caused by humanity's **free will**
5. Suffering is a part of God's **plan**
6. Suffering is a **test of faith**

Christians believe they will be **judged** on their actions in this life on judgement day – **Parousia.**



Creation



Science tells us that our universe is approx. 14bn years old, and our planet is approx. 4bn years old.

An explosion (The Big Bang) led to the creation of all space, time and matter. Humans have evolved over time, through a process of **natural selection**. This is called '**evolution**'.

Genesis 1 & 2 says that God created the world in 6 days, and on the 7th He rested. Some Christians take this **LITERALLY** and read this story as **fact (fundamentalist)**.

Others see the Genesis story as a **symbolic** story (**Liberal**)

Life after death

HEAVEN

Heaven is traditionally seen as a physical place where God is. Jesus called it "**paradise**" or "**my Father's house**". A more modern view is that heaven is simply 'with God'.

PURGATORY

Roman Catholics believe there is a place before heaven, where people go to have their sins cleansed. People say prayers for **souls** to be released from Purgatory.

HELL

Hell can be an actual place of torment and suffering OR it can be when man is separated from God.

Soul

Our souls are:

- Immortal
- God-given
- Eternal
- Make us distinct from the rest of creation
- Return to God when we die

"Mutual respect for and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs and for those without faith"

The suffering of Christ

One of the most detailed stories we have from the whole of Jesus' life is the account of how he died. He was sentenced to death by Pontius Pilate, the Roman Governor, and his death was to be by crucifixion.

Even though Christians believe that Jesus was the son of God, it does not mean that he was somehow spared the pain and horror of his crucifixion.

There are several ways in which the crucifixion affects Christians today:

- It gives them **confidence** that if they accept Jesus' sacrifice, sin can no longer destroy their loves because God forgives those who faithfully ask for forgiveness
- They believe that suffering is a part of life, just as it was a part of Jesus' life and that, having experienced it, **God understands** what the sufferer is going through.

Incarnation

Christians believe Jesus is the Son of God. He is God in **human form**, or God **'incarnate'**.

"The word became flesh and made his dwelling among us"

- Jesus gave humanity an **example** to follow.
- Even though Jesus is God in human form, he valued everyone equally: **"For you are all one in Christ"**.
- God **sacrificed** himself on the cross to take away the sins of human beings: **"For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son"**
- Jesus is both immanent and personal

Beliefs & teachings: Christianity

'Jesus'



Jesus' resurrection & ascension

Matthew 28:1-7; Mark 6:1; Luke 24:1-12; John 20:1-9



According to the accounts of Jesus' burial in the NT, he was placed in a tomb late Friday afternoon (Good Friday). How long he remained there is unclear, but we know that some of Jesus' female followers went to the tomb to anoint the body. Though details of the story vary between the 4 gospel accounts, they all make it clear that Jesus was nowhere to be found. The belief that Jesus rose from the dead is known as the **resurrection** and is a key teaching in the Christian faith. For Christians, it is **significant evidence** of the divine nature of Jesus.

Only Mark and Luke's gospels finish off their story by telling their readers that, after meeting his disciples and asking them to carry on his good work, Jesus left them for the last time and **ascended**, body and soul, into Heaven.

Salvation

Salvation means **'to be saved from a bad situation'**. In Christianity, this bad situation is sin, and the consequences of sin.

Sin has separated humans from God, and salvation enables humans to get close to God again.

Christians believe that Jesus' death makes up for the **original sin** committed by Adam & Eve and so can bring people back to god.

Jesus knew his death was **necessary** to restore the relationship between god and the believers and make the opportunity for salvation available to all people.

Jesus (as the Son of God) could have easily avoided being crucified. His crucifixion was the result of human evil against an innocent man. It needed to happen, in order to **atone** for the sins of humanity.

"Mutual respect for and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs and for those without faith"

Parables

A story used to teach a lesson or a moral

The Good Samaritan
"Love your neighbour"



The sheep & the goats
"Whatever you did for the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me"



Miracles

An act which seems to break the laws of nature

Calming the storm

This is a miracle over **NATURE**

Water into wine

This was Jesus' **first** miracle

Healing a paralysed man

This is a **HEALING** miracle

Worship

Liturgical – Follows a set routine e.g. RC
Non-liturgical - Does not follow a set routine

Charismatic – informal; spirit-inspired

Rosary – a string of beads with a crucifix attached

Meditation – thoughtfulness, focused on a religious truth

Quaker meetings – Completely informal, with no leader or structure

The Bible – regardless of the type of worship, it will always have a focus on the Bible

Private – worshipping alone

Prayer – Communicating with God

Why is worship important?

- It brings a sense of **togetherness** as a community
- It makes a person **feel closer** to God
- It is **peaceful** – allowing for prayer and meditation
- It is an **external expression** of their faith
- Christians **praise** God as the eternal Being and source of everything that exists

Pilgrimage

A pilgrimage is a visit to a place regarded as holy for the believer. Often, the journey is also special. Pilgrimage has always played an important role in the history of Christianity, though it is not a compulsory duty and many today see no need to go on pilgrimage.

Some examples of Christian places of pilgrimage are: **Lourdes, Iona**, the Holy Land (Israel) and Canterbury.

Prayer

Jesus spoke about prayer on a number of occasions. Some Christians follow set prayer (such as **the Lord's prayer** (which Jesus taught his disciples), whereas others make them more personal.

There are different types of prayer:

- Thanksgiving
- Adoration
- Confession
- Petition
- Intercession

Practices: Christianity

Sacraments

A **sacrament** = an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace

Protestant Churches = only **2** sacraments: Baptism and Eucharist.

RC & Orthodox Churches = **7** sacraments: Baptism, Eucharist, Confirmation, Reconciliation, Marriage, Holy Orders, Anointing of the Sick.

Baptism

Jesus was baptised by John and, during the baptism, Jesus experienced the Holy Spirit entering his life and heard God's assurance that he was the Son of God.

Just before his ascension, Jesus told his disciples to: *"Go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit"*. Baptism was a rite of **initiation** into the community right from the start and there are many references to baptism throughout the NT.

Eucharist

The Eucharist is celebrated by nearly all Christian denominations and has many names, such as Holy Communion. The central features are the same: the connection with Jesus' Last Supper, the giving of thanks for the bread and wine (consecration) and using Jesus' words at the last supper. RC Christians believe in **transubstantiation** – the bread & wine literally turns into the body & blood of Christ. Whereas Protestants do not believe this.



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The Church in the local community

The Church has always been involved in caring for others. For example, in the Middle Ages the monasteries provided education, hospitality for travellers and treatment for the sick. In the 20th century, a London church set up the first **Samaritans** phone service for those feeling suicidal. In the Parable of the Sheep & the Goats, Jesus told his disciples that whatever they did or failed to do for someone, however insignificant the deed or situation, they did/or failed to do, for Jesus.

One way in which Christians put their faith into action is through food banks and street pastors.

Key organisations (research these!)

- **Corrymeela** – reconciliation & ecumenism
- **Open Doors** – Supports persecuted Christians
- **Spring Harvest** – Mission & evangelism
- **Community of the cross of nails**
- **CAFOD** – Catholic Agency for Overseas Development
- **Tearfund**
- **Christian Aid**

Key beliefs about God

- There is only **ONE** God (**monotheism**). The 'oneness' of God is called **Tawhid** in Arabic
- Muslims call God **Allah**, which means 'the one true God'
- God cannot be divided and has never had a Son.
- In **the Qur'an** and **the Sunnah**, Allah has 99 'names'. E.g the Merciful, the Just, the Almighty...
- **Allah** is the same God that Jews and Christians worship
- **Allah** has **revealed** his will through his **prophets**
- Muslims share many of the beliefs that Jews and Christians have about God E.g. He is the creator, eternal, omnipotent, omniscient, etc.
- **Allah** must never be pictured
- **Allah** is beyond understanding and nothing must ever be compared to **Allah**. Comparing things to **Allah** is a terrible sin
- All humans must 'submit' to the will of **Allah** (Islam means 'submission')



Predestination

- **Allah** is in total control of all events and *knows* everything that will happen
 - Because **Allah** is **transcendent** (beyond time and space), he is not limited by time or space
- BUT**
- **Allah** does not *decide* what will happen
 - Humans have **free-will** and are responsible for their choices
 - Humans will be judged by **Allah** based on their choices

Beliefs & Teachings: Islam

Sunni and Shi'a Islam

Sunni Muslims (majority)

- See the elected **Caliphs** as the successors of **Muhammad**
 - Follow the 6 'articles of faith': **Tawhid**, the **Day of Judgement**, the **Prophets**, **Angels**, the supremacy of **Allah's** will and the authority of **the Qur'an**.
- ### Shia Muslims (minority)
- See the **Imams** (descendants of **Muhammad**) as **Muhammad's** successors
 - Believe each **Imam** must choose his successor before he dies
 - Follow the 5 'roots' of Usul ad-Din: **Tawhid**, **Prophethood**, **Allah's Justice (Adalat)**, **Resurrection** and the **Imamate**

RISALAH: The Prophets

Prophethood

- **Allah** appoints particular people to spread his messages
- These people receive **revelation** from **Allah** through his **Angels**
- There are 25 key **prophets** of Allah identified in **the Qur'an**, including **Musa (Moses)** and **Isa (Jesus)**

Adam

- Created specially by **Allah**.
- Given **dominion** over the earth by **Allah**
- The first human to communicate with **Allah**
- The first Muslim

Ibrahim

- One of **Allah's** most faithful servants
- Opposed **idolatry**
- Risked his life to argue for **monotheism**
- A great role-model
- An ancestor of **Muhammad**

Muhammad

- **Allah's** final and greatest **prophet**
- Received the **revelation of the Qur'an**
- A great teacher
- A great role-model
- A military commander
- Set up the first Muslim community in **Makkah**
- Must be respected but not worshipped

HEAVEN AND HELL

- Described in different ways by different Muslims
- People go to heaven or hell for eternity after the **Day of Judgement**
- Heaven described in **the Qur'an** as a garden paradise
- Hell described in **the Qur'an** as a place of fire and pain
- Faithful and righteous Muslims will go to heaven
- Non-Muslims and unrighteous Muslims will go to hell

AKHIRAH: Life after death

ANGELS

- Bring **Allah's** revelations to his **prophets**
- Created by **Allah** from light
- Usually invisible but sometimes take human form
- Pure and sinless
- Do not have **free-will**
- Have various roles
- Some are named E.g. **Jibril**, **Mika'il**, **Israfil**, **Iblis**

The Day of Judgment

- When all humans will be judged by **Allah** based on how they have lived
- Judgement will lead to punishment (hell) or reward (heaven)
- Preceded by a state of waiting in the grave called **barzakh**
- While in the grave, people are questioned by **Angels**
- People will be **resurrected** before their judgement

The Qur'an

- The word of **Allah** given to **Muhammad** through **Jibril**
- Originally dictated in Arabic
- The original words have never been altered
- Infallible: corrects all previous **revelation** from God
- Divided into '**Surahs**
- Supplemented by **the Hadiths** and **the Sunnah**

Contraception

Artificial – man made e.g. condom

Natural – a type of practice or behaviour aimed at preventing pregnancy e.g. NFP (natural family planning)

Christianity teaches that sex should be open to the possibility of **procreation**. Therefore, by using contraception, you are preventing procreation from happening. **The Roman Catholic Church** teaches that the use of contraception is a sin. **The Church of England** teaches that sex should open to procreation, however, it accepts that sex is also an **expression of love** and promotes **responsible parenthood**. Therefore, the use of contraception is encouraged if you cannot properly look after an raise a child. You should wait until you're ready.

Islam teaches that children are a blessing from God, if a couple wishes to have them. Muhammad taught that parents should only have as many children as they can properly look after – **responsible parenthood**. So Muslims can and should use contraception.

Families

- **Nuclear** – mum & dad + children
- **Extended** – Nuclear family + other relatives
- **Single-parent** – mum or dad + children
- **Polygamy** – illegal in the UK. Man + more than 1 wife

Many people would argue that the best place for raising children is within a family environment/ Religious families also provide a basis for a religious upbringing, enabling parents to educate their child in a faith.

Theme A: Relationships & families

Sexual relationships

Roman Catholics believe that sex should have 2 purposes: to **UNITE** a couple in married love and to **CREATE** new life. **Pre-marital** sex is a sin, as is masturbation (as it cannot lead to procreation). Some other Christians accept sex before marriage in a committed and loving relationship, as it is an **expression of love**. The Bible says “Do not commit **adultery**”, so having sex with someone other than your marriage partner is committing a **sin**.

Islam teaches that it is a religious duty to marry & have children. Every person should be a virgin before marriage, and observe **chastity** before and during marriage.

Gender equality

Traditionally, men have held positions of authority in most religions. However, there is a debate about what the role of women should be. In the **RC Church** women cannot become priests. Many argue this because: Jesus had male disciples; Jesus chose a man to lead his Church after his ascension (Peter); A woman cannot completely represent Christ during the Eucharist. In the **C of E** women can become both vicars and bishops.

Some of the earliest converts to Christianity were women, for example Priscilla at Ephesus.

“There is neither Jew nor gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and females, for you are all one in Christ” (Galatians 3:28)

“So God created mankind in His own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them” (Genesis 1:27)

Homosexual relationships

For some Christians, **homosexual** sex is thought to be unnatural and cannot lead to pregnancy, so it is a sin and it is wrong. In places, the Bible also says it is wrong for a man to sleep with another man, which has also been used to show that homosexuality is wrong.

The **Qur'an** sets out specific punishments for those who have homosexual relationships. It calls these people fornicators, and **punishment** is severe e.g. flogging or execution.

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Marriage & divorce

Marriage is a sacrament in some Christian traditions; it brings a blessing from god. In marriage, a couple promise to each other through **vows/promises**, to be good to each other, to be faithful, to love and cherish each other, until the marriage is ended by death. The rings represent the eternal bond the couple are entering into, in front of God.

For **RC** Christians, divorce is always wrong. Marriage is a sacrament which cannot be broken. The vows state **“until death do us part”** and these promises are binding.

It is possible to have an **annulment**, which is where the marriage is set aside, as if it were never real.

For most other Christians, divorce is discouraged but acceptable as a last resort. It is sometimes the **lesser of two evils**, and also a **necessary** evil.

Christianity teaches:

- God hates divorce (OT)
- “Whoever divorces... then marries another; it as if he committed adultery” (Jesus)
- We should forgive those who wrong us and show love to all (Jesus)

Euthanasia

Euthanasia is illegal in the UK, It can be seen as assisted suicide, therefore breaking the **Suicide Act of 1961**. It can be viewed as manslaughter or murder and carries a prison sentence.

Some people believe that people should have the right to end their own life if they are terminally ill, incapacitated or in severe pain. This is known as euthanasia. In the UK, this is currently against the law, although in some other countries it is legal (Switzerland, Netherlands and Belgium). Some Christians believe that people should not be able to end their own life because all life is sacred, and that the terminally ill should be cared for in **hospices** at the end of their lives.

Islam tells us that Euthanasia is **zulm: wrong doing against Allah**.

Active euthanasia: being given lethal drugs to end a persons life so there illness does not kill them.

Passive euthanasia: a person stops taking medication to end their life.

Sanctity of Life

Many religions believe that life is **sacred** because God created it, including Islam and Christianity. Christians believe that all life is sacred, and precious. Some Christians do not believe that anyone should take their own life or the life of someone else. Therefore some Christians believe that euthanasia and abortion is wrong, as it is wrong to end a human life. In all legal systems **murder** is the worst crime you could commit.

Theme B: Religion and Life

The Use of Animals

Many medicines are tested on animals before they can be used on humans to ensure that they are safe. This is very controversial because many people think that it cruel and unnecessary. However others believe that animal experimentation is necessary to make breakthroughs in science and technology, and to manufacture effective cures. For example many surgical procedures such as transplanted surgery were traditionally perfected on animals.

Christians and Muslims are allowed to eat meat in their diets, although Muslims do not eat pork and some Christians fast during Lent. **Vegetarian:** a person who does not eat meat.

Abortion

The law defines abortion as **“the deliberate expulsion of a foetus from the womb, with the intention of destroying it”**. In the UK abortion is allowed up until 24 weeks of a pregnancy under special circumstances, i.e. if two registered doctors agree that there is a danger to the women’s mental or physical health, the foetus will be born with disabilities, or the mental or physical health of existing children will be put at risk. Some people do not believe that abortion is right because it means terminating the life of an unborn child. However, many people believe that it is the woman who should have the choice as to what happens to her body and therefore it is for her to make up her own mind. There are also circumstances such as rape, genetic abnormalities or failed contraception which cause debate on both sides of the argument.

In Islam, the life of the mother takes precedence – she is a fully developed human with responsibilities, whereas the foetus is not even born and will need everything doing for it.

Pro-Life: term used for arguments against abortion

Pro-choice: arguments in favour of having the CHOICE to choose an abortion

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Origins of the Universe and Life

Some Christians believe that the universe was created by God in 7 days. This is described in the bible in the book of **Genesis**. The bible says that Adam and Eve were the first man and women. Christians who believe the literal truth of the bible are known as **Creationists**. Other Christians think the creation story is a metaphor for the creation of the Universe, but do not believe that the world was created in 7 days.

Scientists believe that the Universe was created billions of years ago and is constantly evolving. This is known as **the Big Bang Theory**. **Charles Darwin** was a famous scientist who came up with the theories of evolution and natural selection. This theory explains that humans are descended from apes and that species are constantly evolving to adapt to their changing environment.

Stewardship: the idea that God created the world and that humans have a responsibility to look after it.

Dominion: the belief that God gave humans the right to decide what happens to the world and the species in it.

The Existence of God and Revelation

Key beliefs

Christianity is a **monotheistic** religion – they believe in **ONE** God.

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Omnipotent (all powerful)

Omniscient (all knowing)

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Benevolent (loving)

Transcendent (beyond understanding)

Immanent (personal)

Eternal (no beginning and no end)

Forgiving (he will forgive sins)

Revelation (the Divine reveals truths to the people)

Special Revelation (direct personal experience)



The Design Argument

Our world is too **complicated** and full of intricate working systems, to have just happened by chance. If we came across a watch, we would assume it has been 'designed' due to its **complexity**. Like the watch, some assume our world had a designer.

Criticisms

God cannot be the designer. A designer has to be able to correct the faults. There are too many faults on the Earth, and yet God has not tried to correct them. Therefore he cannot exist.

Evolution has given the illusion of Design. The change and adaptation of species to suit the environment is not design but survival.



The Cosmological Argument

We live in a world of **'cause and effect'**. Something must have 'caused' our world to have come into existence. The only being powerful enough to do this is God – the 'uncaused cause'.

Criticisms

The Big Bang has more logic for a spontaneous cause. If everything has to be caused then God must have been caused to exist. Who made God?

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Christians believe they will be **judged** on their actions in this life on judgement day – **Parousia**.



Revelation

General Revelation

God has revealed himself to the people on a mass scale. This is learning about God through- Worship, Reading Scriptures, Public Prayer, study of Scripture.

Special Revelation

God reveals himself on a personal level to the people. This can be through Visions, Miracles, Prayers being answered or specific key passages through scripture.

Most common is through Vision.

Examples of SPECIAL REVELATION:

Jesus as the Incarnation of God
Moses and the Burning Bush
Sauls Conversion to Paul
St Bernadette.

Miracles

Miracles are events that break the laws of nature, they have no logical explanation. So Clearly a reasonable explanation for miracles is God. Miracles are linked to God and were performed through Gods power. Jesus performed Miracles as a way to prove he was the son of God.

David Hume 18th Century Philosopher refused to use miracles as evidence for God, as he believed that the lack of evidence and witnesses made them unreliable.

Coincidence and Luck can be used to explain miracles away. Some logic can be found.

Can we really trust the eyewitness, or is it lies and attention seeking.?

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Theme D: Religion, peace & conflict

Violence & violent protest

Christianity teaches non-violence, as Jesus said **"Blessed are the peacemakers"** and told others to turn the other cheek in the face of violence. Christians are told to love their enemies and love each other. However, God gave humans **free will** and choice and sometimes non-violent protest is ignored, so violence may be used to force change for the common good.

Islam means **peace** and Muslims should act in a peaceful manner, but violence may be used in self-defence. Muslims have a duty to protest about anything unfair and in the UK we have seen protests over wars and issues in the Middle East, what is perceived as **Islamophobia, terrorism** and **racism** issues.

Just War & Holy war

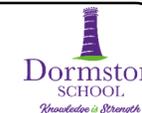
Holy war = it is right to fight in the name of God
Just war = It is right to fight in the interests of justice & the greater good

For **Muslims** a holy war is a just war. There are rules for how Muslims should fight a war in the Qur'an. A jihad may only be fought as a last resort and must never be against a Muslim nation.

St Paul said Christians should obey their rulers, who had been given power by God. St Augustine was the first to try to write a set of rules regarding this, and eventually the just war rules were written in detail by St Thomas Aquinas. **Sometimes if you do not fight, you allow a greater evil to happen than a war would have caused, so you have to fight.**

Peace & justice

Justice = fairness; **Peace** = to live in harmony & without fear
Christians will fight for justice under the conditions of **The just war theory**. Whilst God desires peace, He also desires that humans should live in justice and freedom.



Forgiveness & reconciliation

Reconciliation = making up between two groups after a disagreement

"To be a Christian means to forgive the inexcusable, because God has forgiven the inexcusable in you" ~ C.S. Lewis

"Forgive seventy times seven" ~ Jesus

"Love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you" ~ Jesus

Pacifism

Pacifists believe that all violence is morally wrong. They will not participate in any war, regardless of the reasons for that war. An example of a pacifist Christian group is **The Quakers**.

Conscientious objectors are people who refuse to participate directly in fighting wars on the grounds of conscience. However they will assist in non-military ways such as medics, relief work and mediators. Many believe they have a peace-keeping role.

The Church of England accepts the **just war theory** and sees wars as **necessary** in certain conditions, especially in situations where wars are waged to fight injustice.

Buddhism is a pacifistic religion. **The Five precepts** demand a pacifistic approach to life. **The Dalai Lama** said that **"Peace can exist if everyone respects all others"**.

WMD

Weapons of mass destruction are capable of killing & maiming large groups of people. These weapons are considered unjust because they kill civilians. Some religious believers accept the existence of nuclear weapons as a deterrent.

The Roman Catholic Church does not agree with the use of WMD but thinks they are acceptable as a deterrent.

The Quaker Society **utterly condemn** WMD. They are pacifists, and no outward weapons are acceptable. WMD are indiscriminate and beyond control.

Religion & peace

Christianity teaches to **love your neighbour** and Islam means **peace** if both of these teachings were adhered to then there would be peace. Religious groups are regularly involved in peace-keeping in war torn areas and in negotiations to prevent wars happening.

On occasions people have claimed that religion is the cause of war. For example, some fundamentalist groups such as ISIS believe that an Islamic State needs to be created.

Sometimes even with all the best efforts, religion cannot keep peace because there are overriding factors, such as the craving for power, the need to react or attack or to join allies to protect others.

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