

**Key Concepts:**

- Ethics** refers to moral principles that govern a person's behaviour and conduct.
- Morality** are principles that relate to right and wrong, good and bad.
- Equality** refers to the state of being equal in rights or opportunities. Having fair treatment.
- Justice** is having fair treatment or behaviour, usually relating to the law.
- Compassion** is being concerned for the misfortunes of others.
- Sanctity of Life** is the belief that life is holy because it was created by God.
- Quality of Life** is state at which a person's life is satisfactory.

**The 10 Commandments**

Put God first	1
Worship God only	2
Do not blaspheme	3
Keep the Sabbath	4
Honor parents	5
Do not kill	6
Do not commit adultery	7
Do not steal	8
Do not lie	9
Do not covet	10

# Introduction to Ethical Thinking

**Moral Issues****Caring for the Poor**

There are lots of parables in the Bible about caring for those in need, such as:

1. The Good Samaritan (see reverse)
2. The Old Widow (A poor widow only gave a few coins in the charity box, but Jesus says she gave the most—she gave all she had)
3. The Camel and the Needle (it is easier for a camel to walk through the eye of a needle than it is for a rich man to enter heaven)

Christians get involved in charity events, such as church fêtes, sponsored runs etc... They donate to charities such as Christian Aid, CAFOD or Tearfund. These voluntary organizations support those in need, including overseas. They provide emergency aid (short term help to save lives) and long term aid (improving sustainability such as education and long term health care).

**Caring for Criminals**

Jesus was friends with criminals. He didn't believe they were right to commit crimes, but always forgave them. Here are some of Jesus' teaching on forgiveness:

1. 'Forgive them Father, for they know not what they are doing.' This was said by Jesus on the cross as he was being crucified.
2. 'Forgive not 7 times but 77 times.' Jesus said this to Peter who wanted to know how many times he should forgive.
3. 'Go do not sin again.' Jesus said this to the adulterous woman who was about to be stoned to death. He said we shouldn't judge others.
4. 'Forgives us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.' Jesus taught this in the Lord's Prayer.

There are problems here however when we try to punish criminals. Should criminals have human rights? Is it ever right to give a criminal the death penalty?

**Prejudice & Discrimination**

Prejudice is having a negative view about someone before properly getting to know them. Discrimination is acting out these prejudices. Stereotyping is giving a group of people the same generalised characteristics. Examples of prejudice and discrimination include:

1. Racism (discrimination towards a person because of their race)
2. Sexism (discrimination towards a person because of their sex).
3. Homophobia (discrimination towards a person because of their sexuality)
4. Transphobia (discrimination towards someone because of their gender identity)
5. Religious Discrimination (discrimination towards other faiths)
6. Disability Discrimination (discrimination towards those with physical or mental illness)

**Key Christian Quotes**

These biblical teachings can be used in various ethical arguments:

- ◆ 'Do not kill.' relates to human life, we shouldn't kill human life. It is one of the 10 Commandments.
- ◆ 'The Lord gives, the Lord takes away.' This teaches Christians that only God can start or end a human life.
- ◆ 'I knit you together in your mother's womb.' This teaches Christians that God has a plan for us all from the moment of conception.
- ◆ 'Love thy neighbour.' This teaches Christians to love all people, whoever they are.
- ◆ 'Love your enemies.' This teach-

es Christians that we must even show love to those we hate.

◆ 'Do unto others as you would have do unto you.' This is called the Golden Rule, and teaches Christians we must treat others how we would like to be treated.

◆ 'Pay unto Caesar what is Caesar's.' This quote teaches Christians that we must obey the law of our land/country.

◆ 'In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.'

This is the first line of the Bible in Genesis, it teaches Christians that God created all life and the world. Therefore we should respect God's creation.

◆ 'Made in the image of God.'

This teaches that all humans have a

soul and are made in God's likeness.

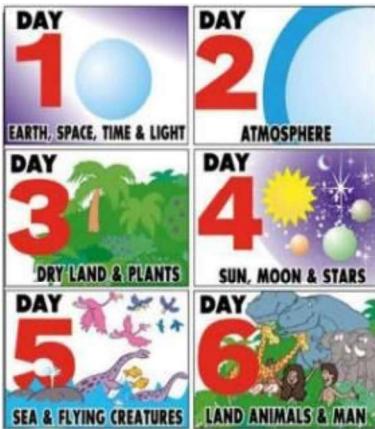
◆ 'There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.' This quote suggests that all humans are equal in God's eyes.

◆ 'Do not show favoritism.'

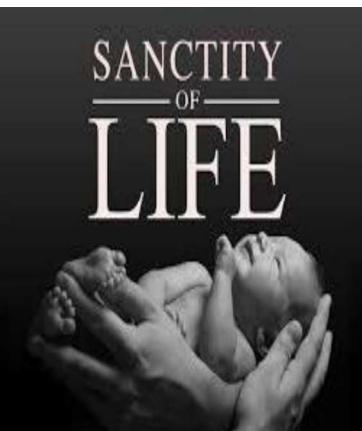
◆ 'and it is good.' was said after each day in God's creation, showing God liked the world he made.

◆ 'Blessed are the peacemakers.' teaches Christians that those who are peaceful will be rewarded in heaven.

◆ 'Pray for those who persecute you.' teaches Christians that we must try to help those who want to harm us.



Christians believe God is the creator of the world, and after each day God created he said '...it is good.' This teaches Christians that God liked what he had made. We need to keep the world in a good state. Unfortunately we have caused pollution, added to climate change, destroyed natural habitats and have been using up natural resources. Christians believe we should care for the planet on behalf of God whilst we live on the earth. This belief is called **stewardship**. We can do this by supporting environmental charities, prayer, recycling, reducing waste etc... We must try to keep this world as beautiful and plentiful for future generations. Some Christians however focus on a different teaching in Genesis, that of **dominion**. God told Adam to name all the animals, and also 'rule over the birds of the air, fish of the sea and creatures of the land.' Some Christians interpret this reference to mean that we have rulership over the planet and can therefore use it as our benefit, as it was gift from God.



## Jesus' Parables

Christians try to follow the example of Jesus in the New Testament, as taught in the Gospels. In a moral dilemma, they might consider WWJD? (What would Jesus do?). They might look at his character, such as being known as the Prince of Peace, how he taught women equally to men, how he cared for the poor, promoted the teachings of love and forgiveness, and how he even cared for those who were against him. Here are two important parables taught by Jesus:

Parable of the Sheep and Goats	Parable of the Good Samaritan
⇒ Jesus is like a shepherd	⇒ A Jewish man was walking from Jerusalem to Jericho
⇒ Shepherds separate sheep and goats	⇒ He got mugged and beaten up by robbers
⇒ Jesus separates the good (sheep) and the bad (goats)	⇒ A rabbi walked by and ignored the man
⇒ The good go to live in eternal life with God	⇒ A Levite (temple-helper) walked by also
⇒ The bad cannot enter heaven, and live in hell	⇒ A Samaritan walked by and helped the man
⇒ This parable teaches God is the ultimate judge.	⇒ He took him to an inn and paid for his care
⇒ If we follow Jesus, be Jesus' flock, then we will have everlasting life.	⇒ The Samaritans were an ethnic group that didn't get on with the Jews
	⇒ Jesus said 'Love thy neighbour.'

## Ethical Teachings in other Religions

- ◊ **Hinduism & other Indian Religions** (Hinduism, Buddhism and Sikhism teach about ahimsa, the principle of non-violence towards all living things, including showing compassion. Many Hindus, Buddhists and Sikhs are vegetarian for this reason, as this includes animal life. These religions also teach in the samsara, the cycle of life, death and rebirth, and our actions in this life affect the actions in the next. This is because we accumulate positive and negative karma. This would affect a religious believer's attitude towards ethical issues).
- ◊ **Buddhism** (There are 5 moral precepts in Buddhism that all Buddhists have to follow. There are additional rules for monks and nuns. The precepts are: 1. not to harm life; 2. do not steal; 3. do not commit sexual immorality; 4. do not lie or gossip; 5. not to take intoxicants).
- ◊ **Sikhism** (An important practice in Sikhism is sewa, service towards others. This is because it is taught in the Guru Granth Sahib and was exemplified by the Gurus. Many Sikhs work in charities such as Khalsa Aid, and practice a communal meal called the langar).
- ◊ **Judaism** (Jews are instructed to obey the 613 rules [mitzvot] as recorded in the Tanakh. These include lots of moral laws relating to every day life, including rules about treating others. 10 of these rules are known as the 10 Commandments, given directly to Moses from God on Mount Sinai.)
- ◊ **Islam** (Muslims must obey the Shariah law, that has protections in for how we should treat others. There are often strict punishments for those who go against the Shariah law. The word 'Islam' comes from an older word meaning 'peace' and all thoughts and actions, including war, should have peaceful intentions).

## The Sanctity of Human Life

Christians teach that all human life is holy as it was created by God. This belief is shared in many religions in the world today. Some religions, such as Hinduism and Sikhism, believe the sanctity of life also relates to animal life. Christians believe that humans have a soul, as we were 'made in the image of God', and because of this we are special or sacred in some way. Because we are sacred, we must never aim to harm human life. This doctrine relates to many ethical issues such as abortion, euthanasia, equality, caring for the needy and disadvantaged, capital punishment, war etc... There is a problem when the sanctity of life conflicts with the quality of life. What if killing opponents in a war is the only way to fight for people's freedom? What if someone is suffering a painful life and has asked for assisted suicide? What if allowing a mass-murderer or terrorist to live acts as a lack of justice to his/her victims? Some Christians suggest that teachings such as 'Do not kill' only link to cold-blooded murder, and that acts such as war or the death penalty do not go against this commandment.