

# Religion and Relationships

Relationships connect us to other people. Sexual relationships, marriage and having a family involve commitment, responsibilities and trust.

.....  
**'With my body I honour you...'** (Wedding vow)

**'Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit.'** (The Bible, Corinthians)

**'Every sexual act should have the possibility of creating new life.'** (Advice for Catholics)

**'If you cannot control yourself, marry. It is better to marry than burn with passion'** (The Bible, Corinthians)

**'You shall not commit adultery.'** (The Bible, Commandment in Exodus)

**'Honour your mother and father.'** (The Bible, Commandment in Exodus)

## Topic 1 Religion and Relationships Within this topic you should know:

the meaning of concepts of commitment, responsibility, contract and covenant;  
the difference between heterosexual and homosexual relationships and the law covering such relationships (the age of consent);  
religious attitudes to sexual relationships **before** and **outside of** marriage;  
religious attitudes to contraception;  
religious understandings of the purpose and character of marriage;  
marriage ceremonies, including the signing of contracts and the making of vows;  
alternatives to marriage, including living together, civil partnerships and celibacy;  
religious responses to the issues of love, parental involvement and religion/race of partner in the choice of marriage partner;  
the concept and role of parenting and family life from a religious viewpoint;  
the concept and role of the family;  
religious attitudes to divorce.

### Exam Questions #A

01 Give two purposes of marriage. (2 marks)

02 Explain religious attitudes to sex before marriage. (4 marks)

03 'Religious people who are married should not use contraception.' What do you think? Explain your opinion. (3 marks)

04 Explain religious attitudes towards marrying someone of a different race. (3 marks)

05 'Religious people should never divorce.' Do you agree?

Give reasons for your answer, showing that you have thought about more than one point of view.

Refer to religious arguments in your answer. (6 marks)

### Exam Questions #B

01 Explain one reason why a person might choose not to get married. (2 marks)

02 Explain the responsibilities that couples take on when they marry. (3 marks)

03 'Religious believers should only marry someone their parents approve of.'

What do you think? Explain your opinion. (3 marks)

04 Explain religious attitudes to sex outside marriage (having an affair). Refer to religious beliefs and teachings in your answer. (4 marks)

05 'The age of consent for sex should be raised to 18.' Do you agree?

Give reasons for your answer, showing that you have thought about more than one point of view.

Refer to religious arguments in your answer. (6 marks)

### Exam Questions #C

01 Explain briefly what is meant by the term 'age of consent'. (2 marks)

02 Explain religious attitudes towards contraception. (4 marks)

03 'Divorced people should not be allowed to remarry in a religious ceremony.' What do you think? Explain your opinion. (3 marks)

04 Outline religious beliefs and teachings about the family. (3 marks)

05 'Married couples make better parents.' Do you agree?

Give reasons for your answer, showing that you have thought about more than one point of view.

Refer to religious arguments in your answer. (6 marks)

## Relationships

'With my body I honour you...' (Wedding vow)

'Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit.' (The Bible, Corinthians)

**1.1 Relationships** All religions value all relationships, especially marriage and the family.

Marriage is a legal union between a man and woman, but for religious couples it has a deeper meaning...

The key religious ideas are: commitment (promises/vows, including to love each other and to be faithful); contract (a formal agreement); covenant (a lifelong, binding agreement before God); responsibility to partner and children.

**1.2 Sexual relationships** **Celibacy** (not having sex) is expected of anyone who is unmarried in most religious traditions.

The **Roman Catholic** tradition says that the purpose of sex is for having children (influences their views on contraception and non-marital sex)..

The **Church of England** sees sex as a gift from God to the married couple; it condemns casual sex.

**Roman Catholic = having children** **Church of England (Anglican) = expression of love.**

Attitudes to sexual relationships (partly due to media focus on sex rather than commitment) have changed a lot in the last 50 years, especially: sex before marriage; changes in contraception & abortion; having children outside marriage.

Homosexual (gay) relationships are now legal; gay couples cannot get 'married' but can have a civil ceremony, which gives them similar rights.

Christians disagree about homosexuality. Roman Catholic Christians say that homosexual sex is unnatural as it does not lead to pregnancy.

The Bible also states that it is wrong for a man to sleep with another man.

However, other Christians might argue that it is simply the way God created them so long term homosexual relationships are not wrong.

Homosexual couples can now enter a **Civil Partnership** which gives them the same rights as a married couple.

**The age of consent** is the age at which someone can legally have a sexual relationship. In the UK, the age of consent for boys and girls is 16.

This applies to both heterosexual and homosexual relationships.

The 2003 Sexual Offences Bill makes all sexual acts a criminal offence if at least one of the people involved, either male or female, is under 16.

The law is designed to protect children from exploitation or abuse by more powerful adults.

Some people think this has criminalised young people who have under-age sex with others their own age.

**1.3 Sex before marriage** Christians believe sex expresses a deep, loving, lifelong union that requires the commitment of marriage.

It is important to be sexually pure (chaste) before marriage. In the Bible St Paul urges sexual restraint and control (Corinthians).

Christians believe it is wrong to use people as sex objects, and irresponsible to spread sexually transmitted infections or risk pregnancy.

Some Christians accept that for some people sex before marriage is an expression of their love for each other.

## 1.4 Religious attitudes to contraception

**Contraception** is a way of preventing pregnancy when a couple have sex.

The way different methods work influences religious attitudes about whether they are right and wrong.

**Artificial methods** The pill stops the woman from producing an egg. The Diaphragm (cap) and condom stop the sperm meeting the egg.

The condom also prevents the spread of STIs. The coil and the 'morning after' pill stop the fertilised egg from implanting in the womb.

Some people consider these a form of abortion. Spermicidal jellies or creams kill the sperm directly.

**Natural (rhythm) method** The couple avoids having sex during the woman's most fertile time each month. The woman works out when this is.

**Permanent method** Sterilisation (operation) of the man or the woman is a permanent way of preventing pregnancy.

**Christian views on contraception** Roman Catholics teach that artificial contraception goes against natural law.

God's purpose for marriage is to have a family, so using contraception could encourage selfishness or infidelity (being unfaithful).

Parents should use the rhythm method to space the births of their children.

Many Catholics disagree. The population explosion and spread of STDs/AIDS present new challenges to this teaching.

Most Christians will support contraception so that couples only have children they can afford; teaches Christians to be 'responsible'.

Some Christians are against the 'Morning After Pill' as they see this as a mini abortion – the egg is already fertilised.

**1.5 The purpose and character of marriage** People get married to share their love, for security and to have 'legitimate' children.

All religions consider marriage the best place for growth (personal and spiritual), sexual relationships and the bringing up of children.

Christians believe that marriage is God's gift.

The joining of a man and a woman in marriage (holy matrimony) is thought to reflect the union of **Jesus** and his followers (the church).

In the gospels Jesus taught that **God's** purpose was that marriage should be lifelong and intimate.

In Britain most people, even though they may not be **Christians**, get married in church.

They feel it is important to make the solemn and important promises of marriage in a special place.

Procreation – having children

Union – a loving partnership of living together

Rearing children – providing nurture & security

Pattern for society – family unit of mutual support

One flesh – sexual intimacy

Sacred – blessed by God

Eternal – lifelong faithful relationship

**1.6 Religious weddings** Most religions mark the importance of marriage with a religious ceremony.

The marriage service varies according to the different Christian denominations but two things are common:

1) the **exchanging of rings...** (the symbolism of the ring is taken from the Jewish tradition and rings are said to be:

Round – to symbolise the eternity of marriage; Gold – to symbolise the purity of marriage; Plain – to symbolise the simplicity of marriage.)

... 2) and the making of **vows: 'With my body I honour you, all that I am I give to you, and all that I have I share with you.'**

**1.7 Choices in getting married (or not!)** Choosing a marriage partner is one of the most important decisions you can make.

In most religions, people choose who, when and where they want to marry – the romantic idea of 'falling in love'.

However, statistics show that many (one in three) marriages like this end in divorce.

All religions prefer that people marry within the religion to keep it stronger.

There is no rule against mixed-race marriages. It is the religion which is most important.

**Arranged marriages** (usually within Sikhism and Hinduism) All parents are interested in who their future 'in-law' will be.

However, arranged marriages (NOT the same as forced marriages; the son/daughter can reject a parental choice) take things further.

Parents help choose their child's partner for marriage. They consider:

background; character; education; health; career prospects; and, of course, ... religious views.

### **Alternatives to marriage**

**Living together:** 'testing the relationship'; waiting until they choose to start a family; choosing not to marry; marriage is expensive!

**Civil partnerships:** homosexuals can sign a contract (not in church) which gives them the same legal rights as married couples.

**Celibacy:** Some people, for personal or religious reasons, decide not to have sex.

**Religious vocation:** Choosing NOT to have any sexual relationships, often in devotion to God (e.g. monk, nun, Catholic priest).

A perceived advantage of being celibate is that they can focus all their energies on their work for God.

**1.8 Parenting** **'Children are gifts from God.'** Good parents love, care for and raise their children to know right from wrong.

Religious parents usually raise children within their own faith.

All religions believe that a family is the best place to bring up children. However, parenting is a skill...

Family life has changed but the family is still considered the best environment for bringing up children and keeping society stable.

The basic unit of mother, father and children (a 'nuclear family') is still most common in the West.

However, in the UK today 25 per cent of children now live in single parent families.

There are more 'blended families' or 'stepfamilies', where divorced people with children marry new partners with children of their own.

Same-sex couples may legally adopt children in the UK.

**Christian views on parenting and family life** The family gives a stable base for society.

The family is a way of sharing God's love and a way to allow parents to show their faith by example.

One of the Ten Commandments is 'Honour your father and your mother'.

'Wives should submit to their husbands in everything' (The Bible) **but not all take this view...**

'There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus'.

This shows that roles within a family should be equal.

**1.9 Sex outside of marriage 'You shall not commit adultery.'** (The Bible, Commandment in Exodus)

Adultery is having a sexual relationship with somebody who is not your spouse (husband or wife).

It is NOT the same as sex **before** marriage.

All religions believe that adultery is wrong, but have different views on how it should be tolerated/punished.

Adultery: betrays the trust in a relationship; breaks the marriage vows; involves lies and secrecy; can damage children.

**1.10 Divorce One in three (1:3)** marriages end in divorce.

Divorce is possible after one year of marriage and divorcees (people who are divorced) can re-marry as many times as they like!

**Religious views:** All religions help couples who are struggling, e.g. counselling, prayer and advice.

**Christian views:** Catholics are against divorce and remarriage (they see it as adultery); they can separate though.

Catholics can have an annulment if they did not have a true marriage e.g. they have not had sex.

C of E Christians: The C of E reluctantly accepts that marriages do break down.

Anglicans can divorce & remarry with bishop's permission – depends on local church (some vicars think vows can only be made once).

<b>KEY WORDS</b>	<b>Definitions for... <u>Topic 1 Religion and Relationships</u></b>
Commitment	
Responsibility	
Contract	
Covenant	
Marriage + Marriage vows	
Heterosexual	
Homosexual	
Age of consent	
<i>Sex before</i> marriage + <i>Sex outside of</i> marriage	
Contraception	
Choice of partner + Arranged marriage	
Civil partnership	
Celibacy	
Love	
Parental responsibility	
Family	
Adultery (cheating)	
Divorce	