

## Religion and Sport

Regular relaxation can reduce stress, free the mind and allow people to spend more time with family and friends.  
However, not all leisure activities are positive, and even top athletes can get distracted from fair competition...

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**‘Run in such a way as to get the prize - Run to win.’** (The Bible, Corinthians)

But remember that...

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

**‘Do not get drunk on wine – it leads to debauchery.’** (The Bible, Ephesians)

**The Parable of the Rich Fool** (The Bible, Luke)

**‘The love of money is the root of all evil.’** (The Bible, 1 Timothy)

**‘Dishonest money dwindles away.’** (The Bible, Proverbs)

**‘There is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.’** (The Bible, Galatians)

### Topic 2 Religion and Sport

Within this topic candidates should know about:

religious attitudes towards the purpose, use and importance of leisure, including pilgrimage;  
types and purposes of relaxation, e.g. stress relief;  
misuse of leisure time, e.g. casinos, gambling and binge drinking;  
morality in sport, e.g. winning at all costs, honesty, fair competition and modesty of dress;  
the use, risks and consequences of using performance-enhancing drugs;  
religious organisations within leisure, e.g. Christians in Sport and chaplains;  
leisure as an inspiration, benefits of belonging to a team, creative activities and the promotion of exercise, healthy living & relaxation;  
finance involved in leisure activities including pay of superstars, gambling and sponsorship;  
devotion of fans including pilgrimage, songs, symbols, memorabilia and mementos, e.g. has sport become a religion?;  
Sabbath and other religious issues, e.g. competing on holy days, source of skills and natural ability;  
leisure and issues of prejudice, e.g. gender issues, disability, professional and amateur status in sport.

### Exam Questions #A

06 Give two reasons why healthy living is important. (2 marks)

07 Explain the attitudes of religious believers to the use of leisure time. (4 marks)

08 ‘The best way to relax is to worship God.’ What do you think? Explain your opinion. (3 marks)

09 Explain why some people say that sport has become a religion. (3 marks)

10 ‘People who use performance enhancing drugs should be banned for life from taking part in sport.’ 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

06 Explain religious attitudes to gambling. Refer to religious beliefs and teachings in your answer. (4 marks)

07 Explain briefly why relaxation is important. (2 marks)

08 Explain some of the benefits of taking part in sport. (3 marks)

09 ‘Sporting talent is a gift from God.’ What do you think? Explain your opinion. (3 marks)

10 ‘It is impossible for men and women to have equality in sport.’ 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

06 Explain religious attitudes towards sport. (4 marks)

07 Explain briefly what is meant by the term ‘fair competition’. (2 marks)

08 ‘All competitive sport should be banned on holy days.’ What do you think? Explain your opinion. (3 marks)

09 Describe the work of a religious organisation working within sport and leisure. (3 marks)

10 ‘There are more important things to spend money on than sports sponsorship.’ 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)

## Sport & Leisure

‘Run to win.’

But remember that... ‘Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit.’ (The Bible, Corinthians)

**2.1 Stress and relaxation** To rest one day of the week is one of the **Ten Commandments** (to observe the Sabbath).

Christians believe God rested on the seventh day & told humans to do the same, using the time to worship God.

This can be done in different ways, but non-religious people need to relax as well...

Life pressures can be helpful e.g. to inspire and motivate people, but too much pressure can lead to:

tiredness; tearfulness; loss of self-confidence; anger; increased use of drugs, including alcohol; depression.

**Relaxation** is a form of stress relief. Regular and frequent relaxation has health benefits such as:

improving memory; boosting the immune system; reducing the risk of heart attacks and mental health issues.

There are many ways to relax, including listening to music, yoga\*, massage or taking up a hobby.

For many people, physical exercise (e.g. running, swimming, croquet (!) and team sports) is a really positive and healthy form of relaxation.

Having a good work-life balance is usually seen as being a key to happiness.

It also gives people, whether they are religious or not, time to reflect on what is important in their lives.

\*Yoga is a form of Buddhist meditation designed to free the mind of disturbing emotions, such as anger and jealousy.

Buddhists often focus on something (such as a sound, candle or flower) to reach a deep state of relaxation, with the aim of enlightenment.

However, many non-Buddhists (including Ryan Giggs and Mr Oxer!) also use yoga and meditation to reduce stress and improve health.

**2.2 Leisure** is so vast, that it is often called an industry. Opportunities range from the passive (seated) to the very active.

Most people have their own favourites, often including: playing games; cinemas; museums; photography; trampolining...

All religions recognise the value and need for leisure time; it is seen as important for the body, mind and spirit.

In addition, religious believers see leisure time as an opportunity to worship God (e.g. prayer) and develop their spirituality.

The Bible tells how Jesus often left the crowds to spend time communicating with God.

Apart from holy day worship, religious people often work with youth groups or get involved in the community (e.g. Hope 2008).

Leisure time may also be used to go on a **pilgrimage** (a physical, and perhaps spiritual, journey to a special place).

Christians often visit holy sites in Israel (such as Bethlehem and Jerusalem) or walk ‘The Camino’ to Santiago de Compostela.

The Bible also warns, in ‘**The Parable of the Rich Fool**’, what could happen if you do not allow yourself leisure time...

Jesus told this parable (story with a moral purpose). *A land owner put all his effort in life to making money. Not satisfied with what he had he demolished his barns and built bigger ones. When the last grain of corn was stored, he decided to take it easy. But God said that he was a fool because that night he would die; he would have no time to enjoy his riches.*

The parable isn’t saying that making money is wrong, but if it takes over your life completely, you become selfish and greedy.

**2.3 Benefits of leisure (include):** it prevents boredom; it reduces stress and helps people become physically and mentally healthy; it builds social relationships; it provides enjoyment and happiness; it stimulates creativity.

Leisure also provides the opportunity to: relax or stretch the mind; meet new people; experience peace; make a difference in the world; improves your physical and mental health; boost your energy levels; pursue spiritual activities, such as meditating.

Many religious believers also believe that ‘**natural ability**’ is a gift from God; however, practice improves the gift!

Many people (e.g. musicians and artists) are inspired to create works of art which show their belief in God.

Some Christians may use their musical talents to play or compose music to worship God.

Composers such as Handel wrote great works of music based on events in the life of Jesus e.g. Handel’s *Messiah*.

The **benefits of sport** include: improved concentration and stamina; preventing stress and depression; improved physical skills e.g. flexibility and coordination; creating a sense of belonging e.g. being part of a team; improved social skills.

Overall, sport can inspire individuals to develop their talents & develop teamwork as a group works towards a common goal.

**2.4 Misuse of leisure** **Not all leisure time is used in a positive way.**

Some people use their leisure time to get involved in vandalism, gambling or binge drinking.

**Casinos**, which are run to make a profit, provide a range of gambling opportunities e.g. slot machines, poker and roulette.

Whether in places like Las Vegas or online, gambling is booming; addiction to gambling is a growing problem.

All religions see gambling as selfish & greedy. It is often addictive & causes hardship, especially to families.

Methodist Christians will not even run raffles, as it is seen as a form of gambling.

**Binge drinking**, including by teenagers, results in over one million acts of violence in the UK every year.

40% of A & E (Accident and Emergency) admissions in NHS hospitals are alcohol-related.

Other problems include hangovers, work absence and relationship issues, including domestic violence.

All religions warn against the excessive use of alcohol because of damage to the body (‘**Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit.**’),

the ill-treatment of others (including relationship issues - ‘**Do not get drunk on wine – it leads to debauchery.**’)

and a loss of moral integrity.

Some religions (e.g. Islam) ban it altogether.

**2.5 Religion and Sport** Most religious believers value sport as long as it does not involve cheating.

**2.5 Religion and Sport Morality** Most religious believers value sport as long as it does not involve cheating.

Christians believe sport keeps the God-given body healthy & encourages teamwork; but it should not take the place of God.

Christians say sport is good so long as it does not become an obsession (an idol). Commandment: **'You shall not make false idols.'**

Some religious believers disagree with sport taking place on holy days e.g. Eric Liddell, 'The Flying Scotsman – he refused to run the 100m in the 1924 Olympics because the race was being held on a Sunday. He ran the 400m instead and broke the world record..

Others believe that by taking part, even on the Sabbath (a day of rest and worship) they can bring glory to God.

**2.6 Morality in sport** Morality is knowing (and acting upon) the difference between right and wrong when making decisions.

Most religious believers view fair play and honesty, not winning at all costs, as essential in sport.

However, dishonesty can be a problem as some competitors are prepared to do almost anything to win...

In football, some players dive to try to get a penalty or get an opponent sent off.

In most sports, players often try and distract or provoke an opponent. This form of cheating is called gamesmanship.

**Money** can prevent fair competition from taking place.

Teams such as Barcelona & Manchester United have vast amounts of money to buy players & pay high wages.

Others teams struggle; to survive they often have to sell their best players. Come on City!

In F1 (motor racing) the most successful drivers usually work for the teams who have the most money. Is this fair competition?

At an international level, wealthier countries can spend millions on training facilities (including high-altitude training, which is more effective than at sea level), world-class coaches and innovative technology (e.g. special clothing for swimmers and runners and data analysis). Fair?

**Muslim Views:** Strict Muslims believe in **Modesty**.

For men, the area between the knees and the belly button must be covered (difficult in sports such as swimming and sumo).

For women, their clothes must not reveal the shape of their bodies (difficult in most sports), as it can tempt men.

Also mixed sports, or men and women training together, is not allowed in Islam. However, some Muslims are not so strict.

For example, an Algerian woman won the 1500m gold while wearing running shorts (despite some threats) in 1992.

**2.7 Performance-enhancing drugs (P-EDs)** All religions are against the use of P-EDs because:

it is dishonourable and cheating; it is stealing and illegal; it is dangerous.

Examples of P-EDs include: **Mass builders**, such as steroids (to build muscle and body mass e.g. for sprinters and swimmers);

**Stimulants**, such as caffeine (which increase alertness and reduces tiredness in the short-term);

**Sedatives**, such as beta blockers (which calm the nerves and creates a steady hand e.g. in javelin or tennis);

**Masking drugs** (which are used to prevent the detection of other illegal drugs; new masking drugs are developed every year).

**Risks** relating to the use of P-EDs include: shame; bans; loss of income; health problems, including liver failure and depression.

Specific risks for females include having: excessive body and facial hair; a deeper voice; a lower chance of pregnancy.

Specific risks for males include: baldness; lower sperm counts; the development of male breasts...

Why do athletes (such as Lance Armstrong and Dwain Chambers) take the risk? Fame and glory, perhaps? **'Run to win!'** ?

However, Christians also believe that **'Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit.'** and that **'Dishonest money dwindles away.'** A dilemma?

**What should happen to drug cheats?** Consider: they are a role model to young people.

Prison? Return the prize money & medal? Permanent ban from the Olympics? Or should they be forgiven? You decide!

**2.8 Sports fans** Some people might argue that for some people, sport is like a religion.

Many Christians are sports fans but they still believe that their religious beliefs come first.

Being a sports fan is fine (e.g. being a fan in a crowd / R = collective worship in a church; singing at matches / R = hymns;

collecting sports memorabilia and mementos / R = image of Jesus; pilgrimage to Wembley / R = Jerusalem;

wearing symbols such as an Exeter City scarf / R= wearing a cross etc.) providing it doesn't become an obsession & replace God!

God must come first for Christians. In fact, many football teams grew out of church teams (e.g. Everton FC).

**2.9 Spiritual support in sport** Sports stars often struggle with money and fame; many football teams have their own chaplains.

These are normally Christian priests who look after the spiritual needs of sports people and their families.

They are there to listen to the problems of individuals, pray for them and provide pastoral and spiritual support.

**'Christians in Sport'** was set up in 1980 to help Christians to represent and share their faith in sport and to train future leaders.

**Some of the pressures arise because sport is, in many ways, part of big business. Sponsorship Positives:** enables sportspeople to have the best training & equipment; allows lower ticket prices; more time to train because athletes don't have to have a 'job'.

Sponsor benefits include: brand recognition; increased sales; positive associations. Sports benefits: finance and higher profile.

**Some Negatives:** makes sport into a business rather than something people do for fun; encourages 'winning at all costs';

Is this a good use of money, say some religions – it may not be good stewardship; Negative publicity e.g. Oscar Pistorius.

**2.10 Issues of equality in sport** **'Sport is a tremendous influence for good in the world.'** (Nelson Mandela) But is there equality?

All religions believe God made men and women different but equal – therefore, there should be no discrimination. However...

**Gender:** Men are usually paid more (e.g. golf), sometimes a lot more (e.g. football) than women. How fair is this?

**Amateur** athletes do not get paid and have to train in their own time, even if they take their sport seriously e.g. Olympic rowers.

**Professional** athletes make it their career and get paid. However, they have a higher risk of injury and loss of income. **Disability:**

The 2012 **Paralympics** showed that the 'gap' is getting narrower, and that disabled people can become role models and stars.

Some **'super-athletes'** are disabled, but take part in both games; the first was the swimmer Natalie du Toit (she lost her left leg).

KEY WORDS	Definitions for... <u>Topic 2 Religion, Sport and Leisure</u>
Leisure	
Relaxation + Exercise	
Stress + Stress relief	
Healthy living	
Pilgrimage	
Creativity + Inspiration	
Natural ability	
Casino + Gambling	
Binge drinking	
Sport + Teamwork	
Sabbath	
Honesty + Fair competition	
Performance-enhancing drugs	
Memorabilia + Symbols	
Chaplain	
Superstar + Sponsorship	
Amateur + Professional	
Disability	