

THEME E: KNOWLEDGE ORGANISER

KEYWORDS

Sanctity of life - Life is precious, special, sacred, a gift from God and should be protected.

Crime - is against the law

Punishment - A legal action against someone who has broken the law

Sin - A direct act against God's law e.g. Murder or adultery

Retribution - to get your own back

Deterrence - to put people off committing crimes

Reform and rehabilitation - to allow the person to change to improve their behaviour

Vindication - the law being upheld

Corporal Punishment - Punishment of the offender by causing them harm - illegal in the UK.

The Death Penalty/Capital Punishment - a form of punishment where the offender is put to death for their crimes. Illegal in the UK.

Community Service - punishing offenders by making them do unpaid work in the community

Forgiveness - showing mercy to someone in their wrongdoing

Reconciliation - to bring back together and repair a relationship

Justice - what is fair and right



Causes of Crime Religious believers think that crime is hardly ever justified however they recognise the following reasons people might commit crimes: Poverty, upbringing, mental illness, addiction, greed, hate or opposition to an unjust law.

Even though some people believe they have just reasons for committing crimes, everyone must obey the law. This helps society to live in peace. Christians believe that God put the system of 'government' in place to rule.

Aims of Punishment **Most Christians** argue that punishment should aim to reform the offender. Treatment such as counselling or programmes such as victim awareness etc can all help the offender to change their behaviour making them model citizens. Punishments such as Prison or Community Service can meet this aim. These show more understanding to the cause of the crime but also show love to the offender.

Others might argue that harsher punishments are necessary to deter criminals from committing crimes. However countries such as the USA where they have harsher punishments still have high crime rates proving the punishments do not deter criminals. Punishments such as corporal punishment or the death penalty allow the victim to see justice being done. Most Christians however believe that taking a life as a punishment is too harsh and in seeking to harm the criminal we are not teaching them anything.

SANCTITY OF LIFE

Christianity teaches that human life is a gift from God. We were "made in his image" and he *"breathed into our nostrils the breath of life"*. We were given responsibilities and were made to *"rule over all the living creatures on the planet"*. Human life has intrinsic worth.

One of the 10 commandments is "do not kill". This clearly shows that any action which illegally harms or takes a life is a sin.

LIFE
IS
SACRED

"he made them in his image" "love your neighbour"
"do not kill" "do not steal" "eye for an eye"
"let everyone be subject to the governing authorities" "do not seek revenge" "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed, for God made man in his own image" "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother who sins against me? Up to seven times?" Jesus answered, "I tell you, not just seven times, but seventy-seven times."

The Death Penalty Arguments about the death penalty are often based on the principle of utility - where the idea that an action is good is based on how many people it makes happy and if this punishment is proven to protect society then it could be justified OR the Sanctity of Life. The Death Penalty was abolished in the UK in 1969. One key argument against it is that over the years many innocent people have been executed and some countries which still practice it have appalling human rights records. Christians have mixed views:

FOR Bible teachings show that retribution is justified for the worst of crimes e.g. Murder. Ultimately this is the best punishment for protecting society against the worst criminals because they cannot cause any harm again.

AGAINST The bible also teaches us that we should aim to change the ways of wrongdoers and a dead criminal cannot be reformed. Most murders are done as crimes of passion - on the spur of the moment the threat of this punishment therefore is not a deterrent. Ultimately God gives life and only God can take it away.

Forgiveness and Reconciliation. Forgiving an offender does not mean that they are not punished. Punishments which aim to reform a prisoner can also allow them the chance for forgiveness. Being forgiven also allows the chance for the victim or their families to be released from the hurt and anger too. This can mean that the offender shows they are sorry OR forgiveness can be given without their input.

CASE STUDIES include Anthony Walker and Julie Nicholson.

Reconciliation aims to bring together the offender and the victim or the victim's families and to actively repair the relationship. BOTH sides must work at this

Corporal Punishment This punishes offenders by causing them physical pain and is illegal in the UK and most countries around the world as it is considered to be a breach of Human Rights.

Punishments may often take place in public or are as severe as amputating a limb.

Some Christians argue that punishments like this for severe crimes offer deterrence to offenders.

They also give retribution ensuring the public and the victim feels that justice is being done. Corporal punishment in schools is common around the world and may include physical beatings being made to exercise with no water or whole class punishments for poor exam results.

Most Christians do not support corporal punishment as it does not seek to reform the offender instead violence breeds violence.



Community Service and Prison

Whatever your beliefs about punishment one thing that all Christians agree with is that criminals must be punished for their crimes and society must be protected. Community service gives the opportunity for the offender to repay their debt to society teaching them in a positive way the effects of their crime. Prison protects the public by locking away the offender. Whilst in Prison the offender can receive support and help to reform them, changing their behaviour. In the UK this isn't work as effectively as it could as there are high rates of recidivism (reoffending) particularly after short prison sentences. Positively while in prison offenders can access education and victim awareness courses. The example of the prisons in Norway show how this can work effectively.

