Your notes

GCSE Religious Studies: revision notes

Religion, human rights and social justice

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Human rights and religious freedom

- **Human rights** are basic rights for every person, set out in the Universal Declaration of **Human Rights** (United Nations, 1948) and in UK law by the **Human Rights** Act 1998.
- Religious freedom is the right to follow any religion, or none. Religious believers may face conflicts when their beliefs and the law clash.

Prejudice and discrimination

- **Prejudice** is an unfair opinion about a person or group; **discrimination** is treating people unfairly. UK law bans **discrimination** (the Equality Act 2010).
- Religions teach that all people are equal: they are created in God's image (Genesis 1:27), all are 'one in Christ Jesus' (Galatians 3:28), and the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10) shows that everyone is our neighbour. In his Last Sermon, Muhammad taught that no race is superior to another.
- Campaigners for justice include Martin Luther King (civil rights), Desmond Tutu (against apartheid in South Africa) and Malala Yousafzai (girls' education).

Wealth and poverty

- Wealth can be a blessing but must be used responsibly: 'the love of money is the root of all evil' (1 Timothy 6:10). Muslims give zakah, and Jews give **tzedakah**, as a duty.
- Causes of poverty include unemployment, low wages, debt, family breakdown, addiction and natural disasters.
- The poor can be exploited through very low pay, people trafficking and high-interest loans. Islam forbids charging interest (**riba**).

- Religious responses include giving money and time, food banks, and charities such as Christian Aid, Islamic Relief and Tzedek.

Issues of Human Rights (Eduqas)

- Eduqas Component 1, Theme 4. Learn its eight concepts: **censorship**, **discrimination**, **extremism**, human rights, personal conviction, prejudice, relative and absolute poverty, and social justice.
- Christians believe every person has dignity because they are made in God's image (Genesis 1:26-27). They promote equality through agape: selfless love put into action.
- **Personal conviction** against the law: in 1955 Rosa Parks refused to give up her bus seat in Montgomery, Alabama, breaking a segregation law because she believed it was wrong.
- **Censorship** (controlling what can be said, written or shown) can clash with freedom of religious expression. Religious **extremism** means holding extreme religious views, sometimes used to justify violence; most believers condemn it.
- Galatians 3:27-29 teaches that all are one in Christ, so **prejudice** and **discrimination** are wrong. Martin Luther King, a Baptist minister, led non-violent protests for racial equality in the USA.
- Wealth: in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31), a rich man ignores a poor man at his gate and is punished after death. Christians teach that wealth should be used to help others.
- Christian Aid works to end poverty around the world, through emergency help, long-term projects and campaigning.

Key terms

Human rights	The basic rights and freedoms that belong to every person.
Social justice	Fair treatment and equal opportunities for everyone in society.
Prejudice	An unfair opinion about a person or group, not based on facts.
Discrimination	Treating people unfairly because of prejudice.
Positive discrimination	Treating a group more favourably to make up for past unfairness.
Exploitation	Unfairly taking advantage of someone, such as by paying very low wages.
Tzedakah	Charity given by Jews as a duty of justice.
Riba	Charging interest on loans, which Islam forbids.
Censorship	Controlling or banning what people can say, write or show. (Eduqas)

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Extremism	Holding extreme views, sometimes used to justify violence. (Eduqas)
Personal conviction	A strong belief someone holds, which can lead them to act, even against the law. (Eduqas)
Relative poverty	Being poor compared with most people in your own society. (Eduqas)
Absolute poverty	Not having enough for basic needs such as food, water and shelter. (Eduqas)

Your notes

Quick questions

Cover the answers and test yourself: remembering is what makes it stick.

1. What is prejudice?
2. What is discrimination?
3. What is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights?
4. Which parable teaches that everyone is our neighbour?
5. Who campaigned against apartheid in South Africa?
6. What is positive discrimination?
7. What is social justice?
8. What is riba, which Islam forbids?

Answers

1. An unfair opinion about a person or group
2. Treating people unfairly because of prejudice
3. A United Nations document of 1948 setting out rights for everyone
4. The Good Samaritan
5. Desmond Tutu
6. Treating a group more favourably to make up for past unfairness
7. Fair treatment and equal opportunities for everyone in society
8. Charging interest on loans

What to do next

Practise 15 questions on this topic

Try 7 exam questions, with mark schemes

Read the lesson, one step at a time

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