Your notes

GCSE Religious Studies: revision notes

Relationships and families

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Sex, relationships and contraception

- Many Christians believe sex is a gift from God, meant for marriage. Traditional Christians disapprove of sex before marriage and **cohabitation**; more liberal Christians may accept loving, committed relationships. **Adultery** is wrong, as the Ten Commandments teach.
- Views on same-sex relationships vary. The Catholic Church teaches that same-sex sexual acts are wrong, although having same-sex attraction is not. Some churches, such as the Methodist Church and the Quakers, conduct same-sex marriages. Same-sex marriage has been legal in England and Wales since 2014 (and in Guernsey since 2017).
- The Catholic Church opposes artificial **contraception** and accepts only natural family planning. Most Protestant churches accept **contraception** for responsible family planning.

Marriage and divorce

- Many Christians see marriage as a lifelong **commitment** made before God, for companionship, sex and having children. In Islam, marriage (nikah) is a contract and a religious duty.
- The Catholic Church does not accept divorce, although it can grant an **annulment** (a declaration that a marriage was never valid). Many other churches allow divorce and remarriage in some circumstances. Many Christians cite Jesus' teaching: 'What God has joined together, let no one separate' (Mark 10:9).
- Islam allows divorce as a last resort, after attempts to reconcile.

Families

- Types of family include nuclear, extended, single-parent, same-sex parent and blended (step) families.

- Religions see families as important for having children (**procreation**), stability, protecting members and passing on faith.
- Local churches support families through baptisms and weddings, parenting classes, Sunday schools, youth groups, family services and counselling for couples.

Gender equality

- Many believers teach that men and women are equal in God's sight (Genesis 1:27; Galatians 3:28). Some believe men and women have different **roles**: for example, the Catholic Church ordains only men as priests, while the Church of England has ordained women priests since 1994 and women bishops since 2015.
- UK law bans sex discrimination (the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 and the Equality Act 2010).

Issues of Relationships (Eduqas)

- Eduqas Component 1, Theme 1. Learn its eight concepts: **adultery**, divorce, **cohabitation**, **commitment**, contraception, gender equality, responsibilities and roles.
- Christian weddings show the purpose of marriage: vows of lifelong **commitment**, made before God, often with Mark 10:6-8 read (a man and woman become one). The Church of England's General Synod, its national assembly, has debated marriage, divorce and same-sex relationships.
- Thomas Aquinas' **Natural Law** says God gave humans primary precepts, or basic purposes. The second is reproduction, so the Catholic Church teaches that sex should always be open to new life and artificial **contraception** is wrong. Other Christians say a loving relationship and responsible parenthood matter more.
- Leviticus 20:13 and 1 Timothy 1:8-10 are read in different ways: some Christians take them as forbidding same-sex sexual relationships; liberal Christians read them in their historical setting and stress love and **commitment**.
- Matthew 19:8-9 and Mark 10:9 are read differently on divorce: the Catholic Church does not accept it, while many Protestant churches allow divorce and remarriage.
- **Roles** in worship: the Catholic and Orthodox Churches ordain only men as priests, partly using 1 Timothy 2:11-12; the Church of England ordains women as priests and bishops, pointing to Galatians 3:27-29, which says all are one in Christ.
- In 2023 the Church of England agreed that same-sex couples could have prayers of blessing in church, but it still does not marry them.

Key terms

Cohabitation	Living together without being married.
Adultery	Sex between a married person and someone who is not their spouse.

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Contraception	Methods used to prevent pregnancy.
Annulment	A declaration that a marriage was never valid.
Nuclear family	Parents and their children living together.
Extended family	A family that includes relatives such as grandparents.
Procreation	Having children.
Gender equality	Men and women having equal rights and opportunities.
Commitment	Promising to stay loyal and dedicated to someone, as in marriage vows. (Eduqas)
Responsibilities	Duties you are expected to carry out, such as parents caring for their children. (Eduqas)
Roles	The parts people play in a family or community, such as earning money or caring for children. (Eduqas)
Natural Law	Aquinas' idea that God gave humans basic purposes, such as reproduction, which show how to live. (Eduqas)

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Quick questions

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

1. What is cohabitation?
2. What is adultery?
3. What is the Catholic Church's view of artificial contraception?
4. What is an annulment?
5. Since when has same-sex marriage been legal in England and Wales?
6. Which teaching do many Christians use to oppose divorce?
7. What is an extended family?
8. What does Genesis 1:27 teach about men and women?

Answers

1. Living together without being married
2. Sex between a married person and someone who is not their spouse
3. It is wrong; only natural family planning is accepted
4. A declaration that a marriage was never valid
5. 2014
6. What God has joined together, let no one separate
7. A family that includes grandparents, aunts, uncles or cousins
8. Both are created in the image of God

What to do next

Practise 15 questions on this topic

Try 8 exam questions, with mark schemes

Read the lesson, one step at a time

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