Edexcel GCSE Religious Studies
Unit 3
Marriage and the Family
Key Words

**Adultery:** A sexual act between a married person and someone other than their marriage partner.

**Civil Partnership:** A legal ceremony giving a homosexual couple similar legal rights as a husband and wife.

**Cohabitation:** Living together without being married.

**Contraception:** Living together without being married.

**Faithfulness:** Staying with your marriage partner and having sex only with them.

**Homosexuality:** Sexual attraction to the same sex.

**Nuclear Family:** Mother, father and children living as a unit.

**Pre-marital Sex:** Having sex before marriage.

**Procreation:** To bring about a new life in the form of a child.

**Promiscuity:** Having sex with a number of partners without commitment.

**Re-constituted Family:** Where two sets of children (stepbrothers/sisters) become one family when their divorced parents marry each other.

**Re-marriage:** Marrying again after being divorced from a previous marriage.
Most young people would not have sex until they were married. Most people would be married by the age of 25. People would have just one or two sexual partners in a lifetime. Most households would be a nuclear family.

Some people say as church attendance falls society becomes more accepting of changes in morals. Why do you think that is?

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1950’s
Marriage or Cohabitation

Marriage

‘The legal joining together of two people as a couple.’

- Marriage is different, much deeper and much more than living with someone.
  - There’s something special about making your vows publicly.
  - People cohabit because they are too scared to commit
  - An individual is legally better off getting married, they have more rights.
  - If you are married you are more likely to try and make the relationship work.

Cohabitation

‘Living together as a couple without being married.’

- Living together is an excellent way to see if you are compatible.
  - Marriage is merely a piece of paper, it is no guarantee of happiness.
  - In cohabitation the practical side of breaking up is very straightforward.
  - People who have been hurt in the past may not wish to marry again.
  - Marriage might kill the excitement in a relationship.
  - An individual is legally better off getting married, they have more rights.
Christianity and Sex Outside of Marriage

Pre-marital Sex: ‘Having sex before getting married.’

Promiscuity: ‘Having sex with a number of partners without wanting a relationship with them.’

Adultery: ‘Having sex with someone other than your marriage partner (also called an extra-marital affair).’

Christianity believes these relationships are wrong because:

• Sex was given by God for procreation within marriage. ‘Creation of Humanity’ Genesis Ch 1 & 2
  • Jesus says adultery and promiscuity are wrong. ‘Woman at the Well’ John Ch 4
Some Christians accept that couples may live together before marriage, but they would say the couple should be committed to each other and marry when they start a family.

All Christians believe *adultery* is wrong:
- It breaks the wedding *vows* to be faithful.
- It is in the *10 commandments*.
- It is condemned by *Jesus* in the Gospels.

- The Church should come to terms with *modern life* and accept this form of commitment.
- Jesus taught that *love* is the most important thing and not fulfilling rituals.
Christian Wedding Service

‘For this reason, a man will leave his father and mother and be united with his wife, and they will become one flesh.’

Genesis 2:24

• Welcome by the Priest.
  - Acts as God’s representative.

• Talk on Marriage.
  - It’s importance to God.

• Bible readings.
  - 1 Corinthians 13 ‘Love’

• The legal announcement.
  - Required by law

• Exchanging vows.
  - Promises to each other before God.

• Exchange of rings.
  - No religious significance.

• Prayers.
  - God’s blessing, for children stay loving.
The Purposes of Christian Marriage

- A life-long relationship of love and faithfulness.
- Support and comfort for one another.
- To have and bring up children in a Christian family.

- to honour and protect you
- to love and to cherish you
- to remain committed to you for better or worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and health.
Divorce: ‘The legal separation of a married couple.’

Marriage is a legally binding agreement and so divorce must be a legal separation.

The ‘Family Law Act 1996’, states the marriage must have irretrievably broken down. The person requesting the divorce must prove, to a court of law, one of the following:

- Adultery
- Unreasonable Behaviour
- Two-Year Separation
- Five-Year Separation
- Desertion
In 1936 King Edward VIII was forced to give up his position as King as he fell in love and wanted to marry an American divorced woman, Mrs Wallace Simpson.

In 2005 Prince Charles, a divorced man, married Mrs Camilla Parker Bowles, a divorced woman. Charles is in line to become the next King of the UK and Commonwealth.
Society & Divorce

In the past divorced people were looked down on by society. Since then attitudes have changed.

- In 1969 new laws were passed making divorce cheaper and easier to gain.
- Women have more financial independence and so are not so reliant upon their husbands.
- Changing attitudes on equality for women in society mean women are no longer willing to accept inequality in marriage.
Christian views on Divorce

For (under certain circumstances)

- It is better to divorce than live in hatred and quarrel all the time. Divorce can be the 'lesser of two evils'.
- Jesus said divorce was acceptable on the grounds of adultery. Matthew 19:9
- Christians believe in a new chance and fresh start for confessed sins so they should allow the same for divorce and/or re-marriage.

Against (under any circumstances)

- Marriage is seen as a 'sacrament' a holy commitment between the couple and God which should not be broken.
- Jesus taught; 'Whoever divorces and marries another is guilty of adultery.' Mark 10:10-12
- The Catholic church may allow an annulment if one partner didn’t fully realise the implications of marriage.

E.g. Methodist & Quakers
E.g. Catholics & Evangelicals
Conception

‘CONCEPTION’ is the moment when the male sperm meets the female egg creating an embryo.

‘CONTRA-CEPTION’ is using certain methods to prevent conception.

Can stop sperm from entering the body or certain parts of the body.

Can stop the ovary from releasing an egg (ovulation).

Once the sperm and egg have met it is no longer contraception because conception has already taken place.
Christianity & Contraception

Creation story in Genesis 1
• God creates humanity in his own image

Christians believe life comes from God. They believe God wants people to reproduce.

Some think using contraception is stopping God from creating life and humans shouldn’t try to stop God doing what he wants.

Others believe we should be responsible and use contraception to stop unwanted pregnancies.

Creation story in Genesis 2
• God breaths life into humanity
• God creates concept of marriage
• God tells humanity to reproduce
Christianity & Contraception

FOR:

• God has given humanity a 'gift from medical science' so it is right to use. (Baptist Church)
• God wants people to be responsible and not have more children than they can look after. It is better to use contraception than have an abortion (Church of England)
• Sexual intercourse was not solely designed for procreation but as a means of uniting a couple. (Methodist Church)

AGAINST:

• Intercourse was designed by God as a means for procreation. For humanity to artificially stop that event is to block God from doing his will.
• Any action used as a means to make procreation impossible is intrinsically evil. People should use natural forms of birth control.
• Contraception is a major cause of sexual promiscuity, broken families and a rise in the rate of STIs. (Catholic Church)
Changing Nature of Families

Nuclear Family

- ‘Mother, father and children living together as a family unit.’

Single Parent Family

- ‘Where children are brought up living with only one parent.’

Extended Families

- ‘Children, parents and other family members living together as a unit or very close to each other.’

Re-constituted Family

- ‘Where two sets of children become one family when their divorced parents marry each other.’

Cohabiting Parents

- ‘Where children are brought up in families where the parents have not married each other.’
One of the purposes of Christian marriage is to raise a family in a secure loving and Christian environment.

- **Children should respect their parents.**
  - ‘Honour your father and your mother.’ Exodus 20:12 (10 Commandments)
  - ‘Children be obedient to your parents for this is your duty.’ Ephesians 6:1 (St Paul)

- **Christians parents should follow St Paul’s teaching.**
  - ‘Parents, never drive your children to resent you but bring them up well and guide them as God would want.’ Ephesians 6:6
Christianity and Family Life

The family unit was designed by God as the best place for bringing up children. The support and love shown during a family upbringing, strengthens society.

Without the morals and principals (right & wrong) taught during a family upbringing society would be more immoral.

The family unit is the place where children are introduced to faith. Without this children may grow up without the principals of faith.
The Church and Family Life

- Churches often run youth groups, brownies, scouts, etc. which provide a moral and safe social environment.

- Some churches run or support charities who offer counselling, marriage guidance, and/or child welfare.

- Church leaders can help clarify religious points in a way understandable to children and offer a place to freely express your faith.

- Churches often offer advice and moral support to families and communities at difficult times.
Society and Homosexuality

• 1967 homosexual acts between consenting adults over 21 was legalised.
• 1994 lowered to 18.
• 2000 lowered to 16.
• 2005 Introduction of ‘Civil Partnerships’ giving a homosexual couple similar rights to a married heterosexual couple.

Homosexuality: ‘The sexual attraction of one person to another person of the same gender.’

Heterosexuality: ‘The sexual attraction of one person to another person of the opposite gender.’

In the past people believed homosexuality to be an evil disease, today many see it as a life choice whilst some believe it to be genetic.
The Church and Homosexuality

- Some fundamentalist Christian Churches believe homosexuality is a sin. Even homosexual thoughts are considered sinful.

- The Old Testament in the Bible states; ‘It is an abomination for a man to lie with another man as he does with a woman.’ Leviticus 18:11

- St Paul writes in the New Testament; ‘Some men and women have exchanged natural relationships for unnatural ones and have committed indecent acts with each other.’ Romans 1:26-27

- These Christians will sometimes offer to pray for homosexuals to be cured of their sinful thoughts. They believe these things because...
The Church and Homosexuality

Some **Conservative & Catholic** Christians feel homosexual desires are not a sin. However homosexual activity is a sin and people with homosexual desires should remain celibate.

- The Bible clearly outlines a belief that homosexual activity is wrong.
- Christian teaching states that sex should be kept within the marriage relationship. Homosexuals relationships are not classed as marriage.
- Homophobia is wrong because the Christian belief in love and acceptance states that people should be accepted irrespective of their sexuality.
- Individuals are not responsible for the desires they feel, only for how they act upon those desires.
Some **liberal** Christians believe there should be complete equality and acceptance for homosexuals provided that their relationship is a stable and loving one. The Christians state:

- The Bible needs interpreting in light of modern understanding (e.g. homosexuality may be genetic and cannot be avoided).
- Passages in the Bible against homosexuality are likely to be a reflection of a homophobic society in the past, rather than God’s will for his people.

Morals are often based on a person’s own opinion of a situation. Some Christians believe God does not condemn people for doing what they believe is natural.
Adoption of Children by Gay & Lesbian Couples

Some **fundamentalists** believe this is not what **God intended for the family** when he created the world and so should not be allowed.

Some **conservative Christians** feel whilst it may be better for a child to be brought up in a **nuclear family**; if a child has loving parents, that is what is **most** important.

Most **liberal Christians** feel that so long as a child is brought up in a **loving relationship** it is **irrelevant** if the couple are of the same sex or not.
The channel 4 documentary ‘The Pregnant Man’ outlined the story of Thomas and Nancy Beattie. The couple wanted to have a baby but Nancy was unable to conceive. It was then that Thomas decided to have the baby. This was only made possible by the fact that Thomas is transgender who has had only a partial sex change.

Thomas’ decision to have the baby caused much debate and angry responses from many people. Thomas and his wife received many disturbing threats and they were subject to online and on-air abuse. They even received phone Messages from Christians calling for them to ask for God’s Forgiveness for their sin.

Thomas eventually gave birth to a baby girl, Susan Juliet, in July 2008. The couple are now expecting their second child.
The Pregnant Man

The story of Thomas and Nancy Beattie led to a mixed response from both secular and religious society.

Do you think the Beatties would make good parents?

Arguments For

• The Beatties are a loving couple in a stable relationship.
• They have shown they can overcome difficult situations they may come across.
• The baby they are having is a loved and wanted child not an unwanted one.

These are important skills for parenting.

Arguments Against

• Thomas does not seem secure in his own gender this could affect the baby.
• The child may face emotional and physical bullying in the future due to its parents.
• The Beatties could be accused of making their child a media attraction by accepting money for photos.
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