

Is it fair?

Is equality possible?

Why do people treat others differently?

What do we want? What do we need?

What should our attitude be towards wealth?

How should we treat others?

How does the media influence us? Does the media encourage us to be socially responsible?

Why are people prejudiced?

What is fair? /What is unfair?

Key concepts:

Authority: Right or power over others. It may be a person such as a priest, a set of laws, or the teachings from a sacred text.

Discrimination: Treating people differently because of their race, gender, religion or class. Religious believers would say it is wrong as everyone is part of a divine creation.

Equality: Being treated the same. Many religious believers would say all people are equal in God's eyes.

Identity: The personality and character of an individual. Each person has their own identity and is unique.

Injustice: Injustice is when something is unfair or unjust e.g. withholding someone's human rights such as imprisonment without a fair trial.

Prejudice: Prejudice is to pre-judge a person without knowing the true facts about them. It involves a biased or unfair opinion about a person or group of people.

Religious teachings on human dignity

General: Religious believers are expected to treat all people with dignity. Many religious texts state that God made every human being.

Christianity:

- Christians believe God is the creator of all and believe all people are 'One in Christ'
- Everyone should be treated with respect because we are all created in God's image with a soul.
- Jesus showed in his teachings and actions that all people have human dignity.
- Jesus mixed with tax collectors like Zacchaeus and showed the importance of caring for all through parables, such as The Parable of the Good Samaritan.
- Christians like Martin Luther King campaigned for racial equality. He stressed the importance of following Jesus' Golden Rule to "love your neighbour as yourself".

Islam:

- Muslims believe Allah is the creator of all humans and they must take responsibility for others.
- The community of believers, The United Ummah, are expected to support each other. Every person in The United Ummah is equal in the sight of Allah.
- The Prophet Muhammad taught the importance of respect for women – especially widows.
- The Qur'an teaches it is important to 'free a slave or to give food in the day of hunger'.
- Muslim charities such as Islamic Relief and Muslim Aid aim to help the poorest people through both long- and short-term aid and remind Muslims that it is their duty to put Islamic teachings about equality into action.
- Men and women are considered equal before Allah and are expected to keep the Five Pillars. Every person is a special creation of Allah.

- Although women can be teachers of religion they cannot become imams.

Issues of justice, injustice and social responsibility

Seeking justice for others and responding to injustices are important actions in all religious traditions. Believers take social responsibility and aim sure that:

- Human rights are observed
- All people have equal opportunities
- All people are treated without discrimination.

There are many ways that individuals may show social responsibility and seek justice for others:

Civil disobedience, for example when Rosa Parks' actions led to the bus boycott

- Alert the media to the injustices
- Make sermons and speeches in places of worship, such as Martin Luther King Jr
- Protest marches and petitions
- Activities to raise money for charities, such as Christian Aid
- Inform others through pamphlets and interfaith dialogue
- Group and individual prayer, such as praying for peace
- Non violent actions, such as fasting

How should we treat others?

We should be treated equally as according to believers we are all God's creations.

The Golden Rule states that everyone should be treated as they would like to be treated. "Love thy neighbour as yourself". Religious believers would say it's a duty to treat others well according to the teachings in sacred texts. Stories in the sacred books show how we should treat everyone with dignity, for example the Parable of the Good Samaritan and The Parable of the Sheep and the Goats. Christianity teaches that we should see Christ in every person.

What is fair?

When there are equal opportunities and when human rights are respected.

When there is justice.

When everyone has similar treatment.

What is unfair?

When people are discriminated against.

When there is corruption and injustice.

When human rights aren't respected.

When people don't share with others.

How does the media influence attitudes?

It can show people injustices that are happening in other parts of the world and move people to give. E.g. when there was famine in Africa.

It can increase pressure on people to be more materialistic through advertising.

It can distort or censor reality.

It can encourage social responsibility by exposing injustices.

Issues people would not know about are raised by the media.

News items prod our consciences.

The media sometimes leads a campaign that encourages others to join, such as Band Aid, Comic Relief, etc.

Many religious charities and organisations use the media themselves, in the hope of influencing people. E.g. Christian Aid adverts

People often think the media gives inaccurate information.

Many religious people follow the teachings of their religion about social responsibility.

people would follow their own consciences rather than media pressures.

short term, as people soon go back to their usual attitudes.

People become immune to the suffering they see on TV and can stop caring.

Many
Any change is

Religious teachings on racial, social and gender divisions

General

- People should be treated as they would like to be treated themselves (the Golden Rule)
- There is often a difference between religious teachings and the practices that might happen in some cultures or countries.
- Although people are equal that doesn't mean they are all the same. Each person is unique.
- There are different practices and beliefs within each religion.

Christianity:

- God created all human beings as equal regardless of gender or race.
- Jesus' example of dealing with lepers and outcasts and his teachings such as the Parable of the Good Samaritan show the importance of caring for all.
- Many Christians such as Martin Luther King Jr and Bishop Tutu have led campaigns against discrimination.
- Although Jesus didn't have any female apostles, much of his teachings and miracles were with women. Mary Magdalene was one of his closest followers. Jesus had great respect for women. The women were first to see the risen Lord.
- There are different practices depending on denominations as to whether women are allowed to be ordained:

In the Methodist and Anglican Church women can be priests and ministers. The Church of England also now allows women bishops. In the Roman Catholic Church women cannot be ordained as priests or deacons.

Islam

- All people are created by Allah.
- The ummah (brotherhood) crosses all national, culture, racial and gender divisions.
- The act of prayer stresses the importance of equality as worshippers should stand shoulder to shoulder equal before God.
- The Prophet Muhammad showed respect for women and the poor.

Women's rights in Islam

- Muslims often speak of women as being equal but different. The man's primary role is to financially support his family. The woman is to ensure that her family is looked after before she goes out to work.
- Motherhood is highly valued – "Paradise lies at the feet of the mother."
- Muhammad treated women with dignity and spoke up for their rights e.g. he gave them property rights and condemned female infanticide.
- Both men and women have the same basic religious duties
- Women are proud to wear the hijab and men also have to dress modestly. The hijab means they are valued for their inner qualities.
- A forced marriage is not a valid marriage in Islam.

Why are people prejudiced?

- Family pressure
- Peer pressure
- Stereotyping – I had a bad experience with someone from that group so I think they are all like that.
- Fear – What happens if there are no people left like me?
- Envy – They always do so well – it's not fair.
- Education – At school we didn't learn about them.
- Ignorance – I don't know anything about them so I just repeat what I hear from friends.

Is equality possible?

- It is something to be strived for but it doesn't come naturally.
- All religions show the importance of treating others as you wish to be treated.
- It depends what it is that is supposed to be equal, e.g. equal opportunity or equality of status.
- Being equal doesn't mean that everyone is the same.

Issues of wealth and charity

General

- Material wealth isn't the most important thing in life.
- Your afterlife is not dependent on your amount of wealth at death
- It is important how you use your wealth
- Money should be earned honestly
- Spiritual values are more important
- All have charities to help others

Christianity

- Jesus taught 'Blessed are you who are poor, yours is the kingdom of God'.
- The Bible teaches the importance of sharing, e.g. In the Bible John, "anyone who has two shirts should share with the one who has none, and anyone who has food should do the same."
- Many Christians will try to work in vocational jobs where they are helping others.
- Giving to charity has always been important and some Christians give a regular amount to charity.
- Some Christian denominations such as The Religious Society of Friends and Methodists do not take part in gambling or the lottery.
- The Bible states: 'The love of money is the root of all evil'.

Islam

- Wealth is a gift from Allah and so should be cared for.
- It is a duty to help others.
- Paying zakah (2.5% of your annual savings) is one of the Five Pillars. This money can help poorer Muslims.
- Occupations involving gambling, pornography or alcohol are haram meaning forbidden – no Muslim should work in them
- Money should not be gained or lost through gambling

What do we need and what do we want?

- A necessity is something without which we would have extreme hardship or maybe die, e.g. oxygen, water, shelter and food.
- A want is a wish or longing for something, without which we wouldn't suffer hardship.
- Religions teach that we need spiritual values rather than money.

What should be people's attitudes towards wealth?

- It is important in all religions that wealth is used wisely.
- Those with wealth have a responsibility to support others
- There is a difference between spiritual wealth and financial wealth.
- Many religious traditions show the importance of using wealth to help others.
- Christianity teaches that Christians should tithe i.e. give 10% of their money back to God and Muslims pay zakat (2.5% of their saving).
- Religious teachings often refer to the importance of the needs of others as well as one's own.
- In many religions wealth is often seen as belonging to God, so how a person uses it is important.
- Many people, religious or otherwise, think it is good to help others when you are able to.
- Spiritual values are often seen to be more important than material wealth.