

Year 9: What makes a good life

1. Christian views

Parable of the Good Samaritan – Everyone should be treated equally, regardless of who they are. Christians believe they should have a close relationship with God, confess sins to God, pray, read the Bible, follow God's commandments, give to charity, love each other and show forgiveness, share faith with others and avoid the temptation to sin.

Christians have different values which influence the decisions they make to live a good life.

“Love your neighbour” Bible

“Forgive those who sin against us” Lord's prayer

2. Muslim views

The five pillars are the foundation in Muslims live their lives. They are the declaration of the faith, prayer, charity, fasting and pilgrimage.

Other rules in the Qur'an include worshiping God, being kind to your parents, not killing those who have not harmed you, not eating pork, not drinking alcohol or using any drugs. Show forgiveness and be forgiving.

Don't be evil to the person who has been evil to you and not having sex before marriage.

“Pilgrimage to the House is a duty to God by people who are able to undertake it” Qur'an

“God is well aware of what you do “ Qur'an

3. Buddhist views

Buddhists aim to limit their suffering and lead a good life by following the noble eightfold path. This includes, right understanding, right speech, right action, right work, right effort, right mindfulness, right meditation and right concentration. Buddhists also have five rules called the precepts that they believe makes them lead a good life. These are; not killing, not stealing, avoiding sexual misconduct, don't use wrong speech and don't take intoxicants.

““The root of suffering is attachment.” Buddha

“Hatred does not cease by hatred, but only by love; this is the eternal rule.” Buddha

4. Non-religious views

Non-religious people have no specific set of beliefs that they have to follow although many could argue that they should follow the law to lead a good life. Humanism is an approach to life which is focused on human value and not on a belief in god(s) or the afterlife. Although there are no set rules in Humanism, they would agree that living a good life includes helping others, helping solve environmental problems and campaigning for human rights.

“Our task must be to free ourselves by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature and its beauty.” Albert Einstein

5. Moral philosophy

There are different views on what determines an action to be right or wrong.

Teleological ethics - a theory of ethics according to which the rightness of an act is determined by its consequence.

Utilitarianism – an ethical theory that promotes the greatest amount of happiness for the greatest number of people. (Bentham)

Deontology - an action is considered morally good because of the action itself, not because the consequence of the action is good. (Kant)

“Do the right thing because it is right.” Kant

“The said truth is that it is the greatest happiness of the greatest number that is the measure of right and wrong” Bentham

6. Animal rights

Christians and Muslims believe that since animals have been created by God they are important however they would still maintain that humans are more important than them.

Buddhists argue that humans and animals are equal but may allow animal testing if it has value for human health.

Utilitarians would see human and animals equally as both experience pleasure, however may allow animal testing if benefits the majority. As long as experiments aren't just done for the sake of it, deontologists would be ok with them as Kant ethics only applied to humans.

“Everything that lives and moves will be food for you” Qur'an

“The righteous care for the needs of their animals” Bible

“God created mankind in his own image” Bible

7. Environmental ethics

For Christians and Muslims, they believe that God created the world and gave humans the responsibility to look after the world therefore they should not destroy God's creation. For Buddhists they also believe it is their responsibility to look after the environment. Utilitarians would mostly believe that looking after the environment is a higher pleasure and promotes the greatest happiness for the great number. Deontologists follow rules and duty and therefore would argue that following environmental rules to look after it is the right course of action.

“It is he who made you successors of the Earth” Qur'an

“The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it” Bible

“Do not seek from it more than what you need” Hadith

8. Technological ethics

Since technological ethics are relatively new, there are no specific religious teachings on them however there are some that can be applied. Religions are generally against killing therefore since drones contribute to mass killing religious people would tend to be against their use, unless as a last resort in defence. For crash situations involving driverless cars, religions would find this difficult to answer as everyone is equal. Deontologists would argue that killing is always wrong however Utilitarians would say to save the people that would make the most people happy.

““Having a valid military target is in itself not a sufficient justification for the use of weapons such as predator drones’.
(Robert George, Catholic scholar)

“Do not kill each other, for God is merciful to you” Qur'an

What matters most in Islam

1. Key Islamic values

Justice
Forgiveness
Charity
Doing good deeds
No killing
Following Allah's teachings
Peace
"Do not take life" Qur'an
"God is most forgiving" Qur'an

2. Allah

Subhanallah means 'God is perfect' or 'Glory to God'. It is used when praising God.
The Qur'an teaches that Allah has 99 names. They help Muslims make ideas about Allah easier to comprehend and relate to. Muslims believe that being able to recall all 99 names of Allah strongly shows their devotion to him. These 99 names include; the merciful, the mighty one, the giver of peace, the creator, the great forgiver, the impartial judge, the wise one.
"Allah is able to do all thing" Qur'an
"He is God, the One... He neither begets nor is born nor is there to Him any equivalent" Qur'an

4. Prophets

Prophets are God's chosen people to bring the message of Islam so they provide communication between God and humans. For humans to live how God wants it is necessary for instructions to be delivered through prophets They are important role models as they were good people who lived according to God's will. Muhammad (pbuh) received the Qur'an from God and he is known as the last and greatest prophet. Other important prophets include Adam, Ibrahim, Ishmael, Isa (Jesus), Dawud and Musa (Moses).
"And from every nation is a messenger" Qur'an
"Muhammad is...the messenger of Allah and the Seal of the Prophets" Qur'an

3. Holy Books

The Qur'an is the direct word of God, which was revealed to Muhammad over a period of around 22 years. It is most sacred of all the holy books and is without error and non-changing. It contains a mixture of historical accounts and advice on how to follow God. Those who can recite the Qur'an from memory are given the title 'Hafiz'. Other holy books have been revealed by God. They have been lost, whilst others believe they can be found in the Bible, although the original text has been corrupted so does not have the same authority as the Qur'an; The Torah (Tawrat), The Psalms (Zabur), The Gospel (Injil) and The Scrolls of Ibrahim.
"This is the Book about which there is no doubt" Qur'an
"Verily this is the earliest scripture, the scripture of Ibrahim and Musa" Qur'an

5. Muslim duties and rituals

The five pillars which are declaration of faith (Shahadah), Prayer (Salah), Charity (Zakat), Fasting during Ramadan (Sawm) and going on pilgrimage to Mecca (Hajj). Muslims are required to give 2.5% of their leftover earnings to charity and encouraged to give extra if able (Sadaqah). It is shown in the Qur'an as being caring and compassionate is a central part of Islam. Muslims, if able, should visit Mecca at least once during their life. Whilst there they do things to represent different events, e.g. throw stones at pillars in Mina to reject the devil and pray on Mount Arafat to be forgiven. It is a life changing experience as they fulfil their religious duty to Allah.
"Pilgrimage to the House is a duty to God by people who are able to undertake it" Qur'an
"Alms are meant only for the poor, the needy" Qur'an

6. The growth of Islam

Islam is believed to be the fastest growing religion in the world today and it is projected by 2070, it will be the most followed religion in the world.
Islam has a relatively young population, and it is suggested that there are more babies being born into Islam than there are Muslims dying.
A lot of people like the fact the Islam offers clear beliefs and practices which have been outlined in the Qur'an. There is also the promise of paradise for those that follow the teachings and practices which provides comfort to people. Islam also offers a strong Muslim community which can give people encouragement.
"The righteous will have gardens in Paradise beneath which river flows" Qur'an

7. Response to social issues

Gender roles –Men and women are equal in the eyes of Allah, they are individually accountable for their actions, Traditionally, man to provide for his family financially and women look after the home and family. Peacemaking – Muslims should end disagreements by making peace. God is compassionate and merciful to sinners, so Muslims should be merciful and forgiving Care for the disadvantaged – It is a duty to care for everyone as all wealth comes from God so should be shared.
"For men is a share of what they have earned, and for women is a share of what they have earned." Qur'an
"if they incline toward peace, you must also incline towards it" Quran

8. Muslim responses to the afterlife

For Muslims death is the start of a new stage of life called Akhirah. After death you lie in the grave waiting for the day of Judgment this is called Barzakh. Angels are sent to question them about their life. If they are good and honest they will be rewarded if they are bad and untruthful they will be punished. Heaven is described as the gardens of happiness and is a reward for faith and good deeds and Hell is described as a place of fire and great torment and punishment for those who reject God and do evil.
"He gives you life and causes death, and to Him is the return" Qur'an
And fear the Fire which has ben prepared for the disbelievers" Qur'an

9. Muslim responses to evil and suffering

The Qur'an teaches that evil originates from the Devil. Muslims also believe they have free will and the knowledge of right and wrong so should choose to do good, as will be held responsible for their actions Allah can intervene in people's lives, however if someone makes a selfish decision that causes suffering they should be held responsible. They believe that Allah will forgive evil actions if Muslims sincerely repent for what they have done.
For some Muslims suffering is a test from Allah as a way for reward them in the afterlife if they are faithful and patient.
"Beware of Shaytan, he is desperate to divert you from the worship of Allah, so beware of him in matters of religion" Muhammad
"Hold to forgiveness; command what is right; but turn away from the ignorant." Qur'an

Year 9 Topic 3: Sikh Dharam

1. Lives of the Gurus

Sikhism was established by ten human Gurus. These Gurus created and defined Sikhism from one to the next through their words, hymns, writings and actions. By living a spiritually pure life, they taught people in India the importance of equality and the belief that all religions worship the same one true God.

The ten gurus are; Guru Nanak, Guru Angad, Guru Amar Das, Guru Ram Das, Guru Arjan, Guru Hargobind, Guru Har Rai, Guru Har Krishan, Guru Teg Bahadur, and Guru Gobind Singh.

"There is one God. His name is truth" Guru Nanak
"Kindness is the essence of religion." Guru Har Rai

2. Stories in Sikhism

Guru Nanak (1469-1539) was the founder of the Sikh religion. One famous story about Guru Nanak tells of his rebellion at 11 years old. At this age Hindu boys of his caste would start to wear the sacred thread to distinguish them. Nanak refused, saying that people should be distinguished by the things that they did, and their individual qualities, rather than by a thread.

The story of Bhai Ganaya is that he poured water for all the wounded members of the battlefield no matter whether they were Sikhs or fighting against the Sikhs. He saw the guru within all of them and so saw them as equal. This led him to devoting his life to the community.

"Make compassion the cotton, contentment the thread, modesty the knot, and truth the twist. This is the sacred thread of the soul"
Guru Nanak

"I see no enemy or friend on the battlefield. I only see the Divine Light (Jyot) of Waheguru in every being." Bhai Ganaya

3. The Gurdwara and Langar

A Gurdwara is the place where Sikhs come together for congregational worship. The literal meaning of the Punjabi word Gurdwara is 'the residence of the Guru', or 'the door that leads to the Guru'. The langar (free kitchen) was introduced by Guru Nanak who was the founder of Sikhism and the first Guru, because of his belief in the oneness of humanity. He offered free meals to everyone, regardless of their caste, gender or wealth. It was a place where everyone gathered and ate together. The langar is also the free food that is served in the kitchen. Many Sikhs serve langar to people outside the gurdwara.

"One who earns by honest labour and shares with others, O Nanak, truly knows the path" Guru Granth Sahib
"The Guru's house is full of God's presence." Guru Granth Sahib

5. Sikh teachings

Key Sikh teachings include:

- There is only one God
- God is without form, or gender
- Everyone has direct access to God
- Everyone is equal before God
- A good life is lived as part of a community, by living honestly and caring for others
- Human beings spend their time in a cycle of birth, life, and rebirth.

Sikh duties include; keeping God in their mind at all times, earning an honest living and giving to charity and caring for others.

"There is one God. His name is truth" Guru Nanak

"The Lord of Time has created all, and all are equal before Him." Guru Granth Sahib

4. Guru Granth Sahib

The Guru Granth Sahib is the holy text in Sikhism. It gives Sikhs guidance on how to live their lives and teaches them about the oneness of humanity. Within the Guru Granth Sahib, the hymns and poems express the importance of the equality of all humans. They also highlight the belief in monotheism and the importance of Waheguru. The key messages of the Guru Granth Sahib are: Everyone in the world is equal, all beings and creatures are His; He belongs to all (Guru Granth Sahib 425), there should be equality between men and women, there is only one God of all religions, Sikhs should live and speak truthfully and Sikhs must avoid the five vices, which are anger, greed, lust, pride and attachment to material possessions.

"The Guru Granth is the True Guru, whose teachings, when followed, lead to victory over the self (ego) and the world." Guru Granth Sahib

7. Sikhism and Equality

All members of the Sikh community are seen as equal. All individuals, regardless of their gender, race, disability, class or wealth, are treated with respect and dignity. Sikhs' belief in the oneness of humanity is highlighted through their actions within the gurdwara and the local community. The story of Malik Bhago and Lalo is important to Sikhs as it shows that everyone is equal and must be treated with respect and equality; it shows that the caste system should be rejected, and all humans should be seen as important; it shows that Sikhs should perform sewa (selfless service) and do what they can to help people in need.

"Lalo, your food is pure, your bread is life-giving." Guru Nanak

"The Lord of Time has created all, and all are equal before Him." Guru Granth Sahib

6. Sikhism in Britain and the rest of the world

525,865 people identified themselves as Sikh in Census 2021 (0.9% of the usually resident England and Wales population). This is an increase in the number of people who identified as Sikh from 430,020 in Census 2011. Sewa International is a British charity that specialises in fundraising, providing resources and supporting disaster relief & rehabilitation. They serve humanity irrespective of race, colour, religion, gender or nationality.

The Pingalwara, in Amritsar, is a home for the homeless, sick people, disabled people, orphans, founded by Bhagat Puran Singh and run by volunteers.

"Sikhs in Britain are an essential part of the fabric of the nation, contributing to its growth, diversity, and strength." — Dr. Inderjit Singh, British Sikh Leader

Year 9 Topic 4: Hinduism

1. Introduction to Hinduism

Hinduism is over 4000 years old and has roughly 1.1 billion followers. The holy book is the Vedas and worship in the Mandir. Key teachings/practices include belief in Brahman and the Trimurti; Brahma (creator), Vishnu (preserver) and Shiva (destroyer). Other Gods such as Ganesha, Krishna and Lakshmi. Festivals include Diwali, the festival of light, Holi, the festival of colour and Ganesh Chaturthi celebrating the birth of Ganesh. Hindus believe in the cycle of Samara; birth, death and rebirth until they can achieve Moksha (oneness with God). Hindu worship (puja) includes prayer, using statues (murtis) and mantras.

"Let the mind be engaged in the constant remembrance of the Divine, and all desires will be wiped away, just as the colours of Holi dissipate when the day ends." Bhagavad Gita

4. Aims of Hindu life

1. Dharma is related to a person's true purpose and duty and the actions the person takes. Each Hindu believes that they have their own personal dharma.
2. Kama is a Sanskrit word which means love, desire and pleasure. It is a very practical part of Hindus' aims in life.
3. Artha means prosperity. To Hindus this means the pursuit of wealth. Many Hindus believe that there are only a few people who do not require material wealth.
4. Moksha is the ultimate aim in life for Hindus. It means to be saved (salvation). When a Hindu achieves moksha, they break free from the cycle of life, death and rebirth (samsara).

"Wealth is not to be hoarded, but to be used to fulfill one's duties." Mahabharata
"This Atman (soul) is Brahman" Brihadaranyaka Upanishad

6. Cyclical nature of human existence

Hindus believe in Samsara which is the cycle of life, death and rebirth. They keep going through this cycle until they live a good enough life to achieve Moksha.

Hindu death and funeral rites include;

- Washing the body and clothe is in white and sometime put water from the River Ganges in the person's mouth to purify them.
- Read from scripture and say mantra (holy prayer) to show praise to God.
- Cremating the body to show only the soul (atman) is reincarnated.
- Perform Shraddha by giving offerings to gods/goddesses for the atman to move on.

"The soul is not born; it does not die" Katha Upanishad

2. Nature of Brahman

For Hindus, God has three main understandings;

1. God exists everywhere as a non-personal God, which Hindus call Brahman.
2. God exists as antaryami; God within humans.
3. God exists as vaikuntha; God as personal, taking form as deities who live in a spiritual world.

Some Hindus describe Brahman as Nirguna Brahman; he has no form but is present both in and outside of the world. Other Hindus describe Brahman as Saguna Brahman; he has a form, identity and purpose, which may vary over time. Brahman has deities (gods) as a way for people to understand Brahman's vast characteristics.

"And I am the basis of the impersonal Brahman, which is the ultimate, the indestructible." Bhagavad Gita

3. Teachings from the Bhagavad Gita

The Bhagavad Gita is the writings of when Lord Krishna spoke to Arjuna, in the middle of the battlefield of Kurukshetra. It explains teachings about teaching him all about the importance of surrendering to God.

Other key teachings include;

- God being everywhere
- Always performing your duty
- Not to be angry or greedy
- How the soul is immortal
- Happiness can be found with God.

"Your right is to perform your duty only, but never to its fruits. Let not the fruits of action be your motive, nor let your attachment be to inaction." Bhagavad Gita
"For the soul, there is neither birth nor death at any time." Bhagavad Gita

5. Four Yogas

Jnana yoga: This is done by Hindus who want to focus on having oneness with God. They try to link themselves and the world with Brahman. They study the Hindu holy texts to understand Brahman further.

Raja yoga: This is a yoga that where Hindus meditate on Brahman without the distractions of the everyday world.

Karma yoga: This focuses on doing good things and helping others as an offering to Brahman. This develop good karma and therefore help towards achieving moksha.

Bhakti yoga: This is about worshipping God through love and devotion. This can be achieved through worship and a shrine and through prayer.

"Always think of Me, be devoted to Me" Bhagavad Gita

"Yoga is the journey of the self, through the self, to the self." Bhagavad Gita

7. Hindu cosmology and concept of Maya

Hindu cosmology refers to ideas about the universe and how it began. It is not known for sure however, Hindus believe that time goes around in a cycle and that it is continually destroyed and recreated. Each cycle of time is known as a yuga. The world is created by Brahma, preserved by Vishnu and destroyed by Shiva. The world is made up of spirit and matter, with spirit being the most important as spirit cannot be destroyed. Maya means illusion which can stop Hindus from seeing the most important things in life to achieve Moksha.

"The Supreme Being, through His own energy, creates countless universes, each with its own time cycle, but all are united in the same cosmic order." Brahmanda Purana
"All that is visible and perceivable is the effect of Maya." Mundaka Upanishad

Year 9 Topic 5: Faith

1. What is faith

Faith is about having complete trust or confidence in something. For religious people this is about having complete trust in God. However non-religious people could also have faith if they have complete trust in something else. Examples could be important people in their lives, political leaders or the kindness of people. People can also have faith in things such as their car will start in the morning as they have trust in it. Faith can be important to people because it underpins the things that they do. They may do things to show their faith such as attending a place of worship, praying or reading a holy text. These are all things which will support their faith.

“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” Hebrews 11:1

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding.” Proverbs 3:5

2. Fact vs Faith

A fact is something that can be proven and has evidence to support it. Whereas faith does not require any evidence or proof. Science is generally based on fact whereas religion is generally based upon faith. When looking at the creation of the world, science suggests this happened through the Big Bang theory as there is scientific evidence to support it. There may be elements of religion that although some may not consider them as fact, however still could be used as evidence to support a religious belief. The Bible explains how God created the world in seven days and some Christians believe this as they think the Bible is the word of God so evidence for his creation.

“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the Earth” Genesis 1:1

3. Faith in Christianity

In Christianity, faith is about having complete trust in God. In the Bible it says “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” For Christians, one of the main things they have faith in is Jesus as the son of God. They have faith that Jesus died to forgive their sins so they can have new life with God. It is also through this faith that they believe they can be saved as in the Bible it says “For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God”. Faith in Christianity is summarised in the Apostles creed which is a statement of belief that most Christians would follow.

“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God.” Ephesians 2:8

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” John 3:16

4. Holy Spirit in the world

In Christianity the Holy spirit is the third part of the Trinity. It is the part of God that is present in the world. There are different ways in which Christians believe the holy spirit is present in the world and this can be through the gifts of the Holy Spirit. In the new Testament these include wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy (predictions), discerning of spirits (recognising the presence of the Holy Spirit), speaking in tongues (speaking in the language of God), and interpretation of tongues (translating the language of God). For people that believe they have received these gifts, their faith may be strengthened because they feel that God has specifically chosen them to connect with Him.

“To each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good... gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy” 1 Corinthians 12:7-11

“All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.” Acts 2:4

5. Religious Experience

Religious experience is when a person believes they have had an encounter with God or something spiritual. Religious experiences include;

Conversion – When someone changes their view to believe in God.

Miracles – When something impossible happens and the only reason could be God.

Prayer – Speaking to God and God answering those requests.

Visions – When people see something that is holy e.g. Jesus.

Numinous – When someone has a feeling of the presence of something holy.

These experiences can strengthen a person’s faith because they feel a stronger connection with God.

“His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light.” Matthew 17:2 (The Transfiguration, a vision)

“So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.” Romans 10:17

7. Case studies

Oscar Romero – **“Let us not tire of preaching love; it is the force that will overcome the world.”**

He spoke out against social injustice and violence amid the escalating conflict between the military government and left-wing insurgents that led to the Salvadoran Civil War. In 1980, Romero was shot by an assassin while celebrating Mass and was killed.

Maximilian Kolbe – **“Faith consists in believing when it is beyond the power of reason to believe.”**

In 1941, he was arrested and sent to Auschwitz, where in terrible circumstances he continued to work as a priest and offer solace to fellow inmates. When the Nazi guards selected 10 people to be starved to death in punishment, Kolbe volunteered to die in place of a stranger. He was later canonised as a martyr.

6. How does faith inspire people

For some people, faith may be one of the most important things in their life therefore it will influence the way they act but also may influence other people too. For people with faith they may be influenced to do things that reflect the teachings of their religion, such as helping people in the community, forgiving others and influencing ethical decisions they may make. Other people may see the actions that they are doing and therefore be influenced to do similar things. For example, the faith of Florence Nightingale when she helped British soldiers in the war, may inspire other people to go and help others too.

“Faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.” James 2:17