



Key Moral Principles

Eduqas A level R.S. G1A Christianity Theme 2F

Key Concepts:

- There are **ten Bible passages** you need to master in order to understand key **moral principles** in Christianity.
- Leviticus 19:34 ('...you shall love the alien as yourself') shows that love is greater than **nationalism**. The Hebrew term '**aheb**' = sibling or friendship love.
- Luke 10:25-28 ('You shall love the Lord your God...and your neighbour as yourself') uses the term '**agape**' (self-sacrificial love) and is followed by the parable of the **Good Samaritan** in which 'neighbour' is interpreted broadly.
- Exodus 34:6-7 ('...a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger...') uses the term '**chesed**' which can be translated as 'kindness'. This passage is a part of the covenant given to Moses on **Mt. Sinai**.
- I John 4:19-21 ('...those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also.'). This teaches that loving God cannot be separated from loving others.
- I Samuel 12:24 ('...serve him faithfully with all your heart') was said in the context of Israel losing trust in God and turning to human kings. Christians believe it is more important to serve God than to obey powerful humans.
- Ephesians 4:25-27 ('... putting away falsehood, let all of us speak the truth to our neighbours') shows that Christians value truth-telling; the writer of this passage may have been thinking of **Zechariah 8:16**.
- II Corinthians 1:12 ('...we have behaved in the world with frankness and godly sincerity') teaches that the way to have a good conscience is to not act in ways that are not true to oneself.
- I Timothy 1:5 ('love that comes from a pure heart, a good conscience, and sincere faith') comes from a passage in which the writer is concerned with the 'sophisticated' discussions of some teachers. The point of true religion is to live rightly.
- Matthew 6: 14-15 ('...if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you') follows the **Lord's prayer** and makes the case that we access God's forgiveness by embodying that quality ourselves.
- Colossians 3:12-13 ('...just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive...') teaches that what Jesus has done on the cross, Christians must also do in their relationships with others.

Key arguments/debates:

It can be argued that love of neighbour is the most important moral principle in Christianity as it is the bedrock of Jesus' teaching (Good Samaritan, Luke 10:25-28). However, it depends on how one defines 'neighbour'. In Christianity, this has nothing to do with only local relationships governed by nationalism. However, the Bible teaches that this would not be possible without a focus on the love and worship of God. Furthermore, there are other themes which vie for importance such as the most mentioned theme in the Gospels: The Kingdom of God.

Some view that the basis for morality is God's own behaviour. This is from the notion of a covenant where God sets the tone for the relationship with humans (chesed). Furthermore, as Jesus is seen as setting the example for Christians, and Jesus is God (according to the Trinity), then God's behaviour is indeed the basis of morality. Conversely, a case could be made that the basis of Christian behaviour is not God - as God is beyond time and space, but is the commandments that God gives through revelation. An argument can also be made that God's behaviour is so bad (the murder of the human race at the time of Noah) that it should not be emulated.

Key questions:

- In what ways is the lifestyle and attitude of Jesus important for Christians today?
- What are different ways in which terms such as 'love', 'neighbour' and 'forgiveness' can be understood? How do Christians interpret these words?
- Does the apparent failure of churches to live by these moral principles prove that they are irrelevant?
- Does Christianity set the 'moral bar' too high? Or is it good to have the moral compass provided by these passages?

Key quotes:

'To love another person is to see the face of God.' (V. Hugo)

'God has left sin in the world in order that there may be forgiveness.' (T. Merton)

'How many observe Christ's birthday! How few, his precepts!' (B. Franklin)

'Human decency is not derived from religion. It precedes it.' (C. Hitchens)



Key words:

(You must know all ten Bible passages)

Moral principles | nationalism | aheb | agape | Good Samaritan | chesed | Mt. Sinai | Zechariah 8:16 | Lord's Prayer