

# GCSE Religious Studies Christianity Knowledge Organiser

## Christian beliefs – The Bible

### Key concepts

Bible	reason
baptism	free will
vows	judgement
Eucharist	marriage symbols
revelation	pilgrimage
confirmation	heaven/hell

### Past exam question

- “The Bible’s teachings are all a Christian needs to live their life for God.” [15] 2019

### Links

Unit 1 Christianity – God; Morality.

Unit 1 Issues of Life and Death – Origin and Value of Human Life.

Unit 1 Issues of Good and Evil – Crime and Punishment; Forgiveness.

Unit 2 Issues of Human Rights – Human Rights and Social Justice.

### Word of God?

Some Christians believe that God told humans what to write, so it is literally the ‘word of God’ and has ultimate authority. It is seen as sacred scripture (religious writing) as it contains the final teachings given by God: “Do not add to what I command you, and do not subtract from it” (Deut. 4:2). For Christians, the Bible is where they can see what God is like and what he wants (revelation). Christians who do not believe that it is the actual word of God still think it is inspired by God: “All scripture is God-breathed” (2 Timothy 3:16). Christians would agree that the teachings come from God, so it is inspirational; they often use it to make decisions.

### A collection of writings

The Bible is often described as being like a library as it has different types of books in it e.g. history, poetry, law, prophecy, letters. Many Christians and scholars are aware that these books need to be seen against the background of when and where they were written and who the audience was meant to be. They also need to think about why they were written – often to make a moral teaching. Some Christians would not agree with making secular (worldly) judgements about books that are inspired by God and which have authority for all time.

### How is the Bible used?

Christians use the Bible as guidance when making moral decisions, such as how to treat others and about life and death issues e.g. euthanasia or abortion. It is “useful for teaching [about Christian beliefs], rebuking [telling off], correcting [how to mend the broken relationship with God] and training in righteousness [how to live a Christian life]” (2 Timothy 3: 16). The Bible is used during worship when passages are often read or when the priest uses it to teach. It is used at christenings, weddings, and funerals. Reading the Bible can help Christians in their everyday lives.

### Ways of interpreting the Bible

**Literal interpretation** – some Christians believe that there are no mistakes in the Bible and that everything happened just as the Bible says e.g. the creation happened exactly as the Genesis account states.

**Symbolic (non-literal) interpretation** – other Christians might say that parts of the Bible might not be ‘literally’ true but still have meaning e.g. the creation story in Genesis teaches humans about their responsibilities to look after the planet.

**Conservative interpretation** – some Christians think that the Bible needs to be interpreted in the light of the world into which it was written but that God’s truth is still revealed (by the humans who wrote it) e.g. God’s role in the creation is important, even if they don’t believe that it happened in six days.

**Biblical myth interpretation** – some Christians accept that some stories in the Bible can also be found in other, earlier, cultures. By accepting this interpretation, Christians would say that the Bible’s messages are open to all people in all ages.

### Other sources of authority

Although the Bible is their main source of authority, Christians accept that some modern problems might not be specifically mentioned. When making decisions or thinking about what is right and wrong, Christians also look to other sources of authority: **family** – a Christian family would have the values of living a Christian life; **conscience** – their own awareness of what is right and wrong even if they do not know the teachings of the Bible with “consciences bearing witness” (Romans 2:15); **reason** – thinking logically about a situation; **society** – life in the UK has been influenced by Christianity so the values of society can be used to make decisions; **civil law** – in the past, UK laws were based on Christian teachings but this might have changed, many Christians believe that the laws of the Bible apply to all people in all times (**absolute morality**); **circumstances** – moral attitudes change so some Christians might adapt their views to fit a specific event (**situation ethics**). Christians might also ask the leader of their church/chapel for advice when dealing with difficult situations e.g. matters of life and death, same-sex marriage, gender issues, prejudice and discrimination.