

Religious Studies Knowledge Organiser: Year 8 Matters of Life and death

Matters of Life and Death Key Words

abortion -the removal of a foetus from the womb before it can survive

assisted suicide- providing a seriously ill person with the means to commit suicide

euthanasia - the painless killing of someone dying from a painful disease

immortality of the soul- the idea that the soul lives on after the death of the body

near-death experience- when someone about to die has an out of body experience

non-voluntary euthanasia- ending someone's life painlessly when they are unable to ask, but you have good reason for thinking they would want you to do so

paranormal- unexplained things which are thought to have spiritual causes eg ghosts, mediums

quality of life- the idea that life must have some benefits for it to be worth living

reincarnation- the belief that, after death, souls are reborn in a new body

resurrection- the belief that, after death, the body stays in the grave until the end of the world when it is raised

sanctity of life- the belief that life is holy and belongs to God

voluntary euthanasia- ending life painlessly when someone in great pain asks for death

Christian beliefs about life after death

Some Christians believe in the resurrection of the body and others believe in immortality of the soul. All Christians believe in heaven.

Why Christians believe in life after death:

Christians believe in life after death because:

- Jesus rose from the dead
- The Bible and the Creeds say there is life after death
- The Church teaches that there is life after death
- The soul is something that can never die and life after death gives meaning and purpose to life

How Christian beliefs about life after death affect the lives of Christians:

They believe that how they live their lives will decide what happens to them when they die:

- They will therefore live a good Christian life
- Go to church, pray and worship God
- Follow the parable of the sheep and the goats - and help those in need

Why some people do not believe in life after death

Some people do not believe in God and believe this life is all there is. They do not believe in life after death because:

- They do not believe in God and that there is no where for life after death to happen
- The different religions all say something different, if there was a life after death they would all say the same thing
- Evidence of the paranormal has all been challenged by scientists
- Mediums could be making it up; near death experiences could be a trick of the brain and reincarnation experiences could be lies
- Space journeys have shown there is no heaven above the sky
- Science shows that the soul cannot live without the body, so when the body dies the soul dies too, there is no need for life after death

Non-religious reasons for believing in life after death

Why non-religious people believe in life after death:

Some people believe in life after death for non-religious reasons such as:

Near-death Experiences	When someone is clinically dead and then comes back to life, after a heart attack or operation, and can remember what happened. Sometimes they see bright lights or dead relatives.
Evidence of a spirit world	Some people believe ghosts, ouija boards and mediums prove there is a life after death. Mediums, such as TV's John Edwards, claim to speak to dead people in the spirit world.
Evidence of reincarnation	Some people have reincarnation experiences, where they believe they have lived before. An example was a boy called Cameron (TV's The Boy who lived Before) who believed he had lived in a past life.

Christian attitudes to abortion

What are the different Christian attitudes to abortion?

Catholic and Evangelical Churches	Liberal Protestant Churches
Abortion is always wrong	Abortion is wrong but must be allowed in some circumstances
Life belongs to God, so only God can end a pregnancy	Life does not begin at conception
Life begins at conception, so abortion is murder	Jesus said do the most loving thing or the lesser of two evils - sometimes abortion is the most loving thing to do
Follow the teachings of the Church which is that abortion is wrong	The sanctity of life can be broken in a just war so why not in a just abortion
Adoption is an alternative to abortion	Doctors have the ability to find out if a baby is going to be severely handicapped so parents should have the option to stop their baby from suffering through abortion

The Nature of Euthanasia

What is the UK law on euthanasia?

The UK law states that assisted suicide, voluntary euthanasia and non-voluntary euthanasia are all murder. However, the law now allows stopping artificial feeding or not giving treatment (passive euthanasia) as they do not view these things as euthanasia.

Euthanasia is a controversial issue because:

AGAINST Euthanasia (keep it illegal)	FOR Euthanasia (make it legal)
Relatives might use euthanasia to get inheritance or stop taking care of elderly relatives	Discoveries in medicine mean that people who would have died are being kept alive, often in agony, and should have the right to die
An incurable disease might not actually end the person's life or a cure might be found	Euthanasia is already legal as doctors are allowed to switch off life support machines
It is a doctor's job to save lives not end them	People have the right to commit suicide so why give them the right to ask doctors to assist their suicide if they are too weak to do it alone
People might change their mind, but it might be too late	Doctors can now stop treatment to allow people to die
Who would make sure that only people who really wanted or needed euthanasia died?	If an animal suffers we put it out if its misery, yet we allow humans to suffer, it is more humane to allow euthanasia

The Nature of Abortion

What is the UK law on abortion?

Abortion is allowed in the UK if two doctors agree that there is a medical reason for it such as:

- The mother's life is at risk
- The mother's physical or mental health is at risk
- The child is very likely to be born severely handicapped
- There would be a serious effect on other children in the family

Abortions cannot be carried out after 24 weeks of pregnancy, unless the mother's life is at risk or the foetus has severe handicaps.

Abortion is a controversial issue because:

- People disagree about when life begins, some believe it begins at the moment of conception others believe it is when the foetus can live outside the mother
- Some people believe that a woman has the right to do what she wants with her own body.
- Many religious people believe that the unborn child's right to life is greater than the mother's rights.
- Some people believe the time limit should be reduced to 18 or 20 weeks because of medical advances
- There are also arguments about whether medical staff should have to carry out abortions

Christian attitudes to euthanasia

What are the different Christian attitudes to euthanasia?

All Christians believe that abortion is wrong but they have slightly different attitudes: Catholics and many Liberal Protestants believe that assisted suicide, voluntary euthanasia and non-voluntary euthanasia are all wrong BUT they believe that switching off life support machines, not giving treatment and giving painkillers that may inadvertently cause death are not euthanasia and therefore allowed. They believe this because:

- They believe in the sanctity of life, God gave life so only God can take life away
- Euthanasia is murder which is against the 10 Commandments
- If someone is brain dead, they have already died so switching off life support machine is accepting what God has already decided
- If you give painkillers to ease someone's pain but it kills them, this is not murder because you only intended to ease their pain (doctrine of double effect)

Some Christians (Evangelical Protestants) believe that all forms of euthanasia are wrong, even turning off life support machines. They believe this because:

- The Bible forbids suicide and murder, and they take the Bible literally
- They believe in the sanctity of life, only God can take life and it says in the Bible that life and death decisions belong to God alone

A few Christians accept euthanasia in certain circumstances because:

- Medical advances mean it is hard to know what God's wishes about someone's death are. God may want someone to die but doctors are keeping them alive
- The teaching of Jesus on loving your neighbour can be used to justify assisting suicide because it might be the most loving thing to do