

Good & evil actions and intentions

Some people suggest that those who commit the worst crimes are evil.

But where does evil come from?

Christianity: Evil is seen as the abuse of the **free will** God gave to humans. In order to be able to appreciate good, then evil has to exist. Most Christians believe in a figure called **the devil** or Satan. So, evil is a combination of internal and external factors.

Islam: The **Qu'ran** says there is a devil who was an angel. Iblis was expelled from paradise because he refused to bow to Adam. Iblis continually tempts and punishes humans to be wicked. Evil is a mix of powerful evil being and the weakness of humans.

3 aims of punishment

Retribution: is the least positive of the 3 aims of punishment. It means that society, on behalf of the victim, is getting its own back on the offender. In the Old Testament it is referred to as *lex talionis* (the law of retaliation). **"An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth"**

Deterrence: This is the belief that if offenders are seen to be punished for wrongdoing, then this may 'put off' others from committing that offence. The offender themselves might also be put off from reoffending.

Reformation: This is the aim of punishment most Christians prefer because it seeks to help offenders by working with them to help them understand that their behaviour is harming society. It is hoped that offenders will change their attitudes and become responsible, law-abiding members of the community.

Religion, crime and punishment

Reasons for crime & types of crime

Causes of crime include: *upbringing, mental illness, poverty, opposition to existing laws, greed/hate, or addiction.*

There are 3 key **types** of crimes: *Crimes against the **person** (e.g. murder); Crimes against **property** (e.g. burglary); Crimes against the **state** (e.g. terrorism).*

St Paul tells Christians to *"obey the laws of the land"*

Suffering

For many people, suffering is an unfortunate part of living. It may be caused by something natural, such as an illness, or it may be due to how people have behaved. Whatever the cause, Christians believe they should try to help others who are suffering. Christians feel that they should follow the example of Jesus, who helped many whom he saw were suffering, and who taught that those who believe in God should help those who suffer.

Heller Keller was a Christian writer and activist who became deaf and blind when she was only 19 months old. She said *"We are never really happy until we try to brighten the lives of others".*

Treatment of criminals

Christians do not disagree with discipline. They see a positive need for it: **"He who spares the rod hates their children, but the one who loves their children is careful to discipline them"**. However, they may question the method used since Jesus' teachings on love and caring for people rule out any physical punishment. Instead, Christians focus on positive sanctions that help offenders to realise the error of their ways and reform. Jesus always treated people with respect, and Christians believe they should follow his example.

Corporal punishment: to punish the offender by causing physical pain. It is illegal in the UK but allowed in some other parts of the world. For example some Muslim countries such as Iran and Saudi Arabia, allow caning as punishment for offences such as gambling and sexual promiscuity.

Community service: offers offenders a chance to make up for what they have done and receive help in reforming their behaviour. Christians are in general agreement that it is a suitable punishment for fairly minor offences.

The death penalty

Abolished in the UK in 1965 and is now illegal in many EU countries.

The Principle of Utility = an action is right if it promotes the maximum happiness for the maximum number of people.

The sanctity of life = God gave life, so only He has the right to take it away.

For	Against
- It is a justifiable retribution for serious crimes - It is a deterrent - It gives the victim's family a sense of justice	- Only God has the right to take life - Jesus taught a message of love and forgiveness - It is hypocritical

Forgiveness

Forgiveness is a core Christian belief and one Jesus emphasised in his teachings.

Christians are expected to be forgiving towards those who wrong them, if they expect to be forgiven themselves: **"Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us"**.

Many Christians would argue that forgiveness is not a replacement for punishment.

During his ministry Jesus was asked how many times you should forgive someone who wrongs you and he replied **"I tell you not seven times, but seventy-seven times"**

"Mutual respect for and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs and for those without faith"