

DIVORCE AND SEPARATION

Christian attitudes to Divorce and Separation

The Catholic Church does not recognise divorce and regards marriage as a lifelong commitment. In the situation where a marriage breaks down and there is no chance of reconciliation there must be an annulment or separation.

“Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning. I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery.” (Matthew 19:8-9)

All other Christian denominations accept divorce, but the issue is complicated if a divorced Christian wants to remarry.

An annulment is when a court says your marriage is not legally valid. The Catholic Church teaches that annulment may be granted for the non-consummation of marriage, which means a married couple have not had sex.

Anglicans

- Accept divorce as UK law allows it.
- Discourage remarriage but some vicars will agree to a service of prayer and dedication.

Non-Conformists (E.g. Methodists)

- Divorce is best avoided
- Remarriage is permitted if it is suitable and acceptable to all.
- No minister can be forced to conduct a remarriage against their will.

Catholics

- Do not recognise divorce
- Marriage is a sacrament that cannot be dissolved except for special reasons
- Some marriages can be annulled
- If a catholic remarries without an annulment they can attend Mass but not receive Holy Communion

Muslim attitudes to divorce

Married couples should try to reconcile. Before a divorce takes place an imam and the Muslim community seek to help a couple.

“And if you fear dissension between the two, send an arbitrator from his people and an arbitrator from her people. If they both desire reconciliation, God will cause it between them. Indeed, God is ever knowing and Aware. (Qur’an 4:35)

A period of three months is given to give the couple time to reconcile and ensure the woman is not pregnant.

Christian and Muslim marriage ceremonies

Christian wedding ceremony

- Marriage is a gift from God and take place to churches or chapels to reflect this.
- The vicar welcomes everyone and explains the nature of marriage.
- The couples exchange vows with the main Christian beliefs:

"To have and to hold, from this day forward, for better or worse, for richer or poorer etc"

- The couple exchange rings as a sign of commitment
"With my body I honour you, all that I am I give to you and share with you"
- The vicar declares the couple married.
- There are prayers and bible readings and the priest gives a sermon.
- Hymns may be sung.
- The couple must sign the register; a legal document.

Islamic wedding ceremony

- The **wali** offers the bride to the groom.
- There must be two witnesses who are good Muslims.
- They must make a payment of **mahr** (dowry) by the groom to the bride.
- The marriage contract is signed by the bride and groom and witnesses.
- A sermon is given to bless the marriage.
- Vows are not necessary but may be exchanged if the bride and groom choose to.
- The wedding ceremony ends with prayers for the bride, groom and families.
- The wedding banquet or walima is traditionally held by the groom after this has taken place.
- A separate civil ceremony must take place to legalise the marriage.

Issues of relationships key words

Adultery → Voluntary sexual intercourse between a married person and a person who is not their spouse.

Divorce → To legally end a marriage.

Cohabitation → To live together in a sexual relationship without being married or in a civil partnership.

Commitment → A sense of dedication and obligation to someone or something.

Contraception → Methods used to prevent a woman from becoming pregnant during or following sexual intercourse.

Gender Equality → People of all genders enjoying the same rights and opportunities in all aspects of their lives.

Responsibilities → Actions/duties you are expected to carry out.

Roles → Position, status or function of a person in society as well as the characteristics expected of them.

Monotheistic Religions → Religions that believe there is only one God.

Secular → A society where religious beliefs and practices are increasingly less important to a growing number of people.

Pluralism → The existence of different groups and beliefs within society.

Patriarchal → A family or society controlled by men.

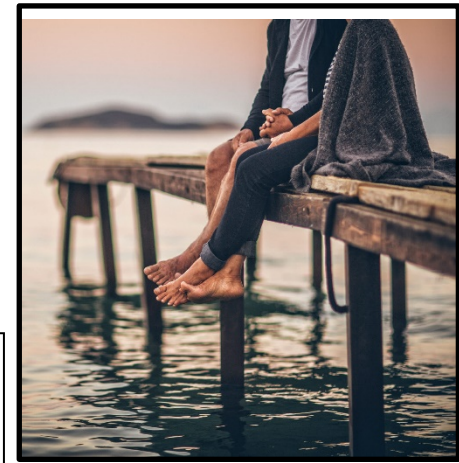
Matriarchal → A family or society controlled by women.

Bigamy → Entering into a marriage with someone while still being legally married to another.

Promiscuity → Having a number of casual sexual relationships.

Fidelity → Two people being sexually faithful to each other.

Procreation → Reproduction.



ATTITUDES TO ROLES OF MEN AND WOMEN IN WORSHIP AND AUTHORITY

Christian Attitudes

- In Jesus' time it was normal for men to take up positions of authority – society has adapted and women are more equal.
- In the early Christian Church the original disciples were all men.
- Gender is irrelevant as long as you have faith in Jesus (Galatians 3:27-29)
- Biblical teachings indicate that women and men are different and should not have authority over men (1 Timothy 2:1-12)
- Christians believe that all humans are created in the image of God, so each human life is equal and sacred.
- In the Parable of the Good Samaritan Jesus taught that you should not discriminate.
- Jesus' actions showed that he respected women and he had women among his closest followers, which would have been unusual at the time.

Catholic and Orthodox Churches

- Women can take up active roles in worship. They can become a nun taking vows to devote to God. They are equal members of church congregations with men.
- Women cannot be ordained. They cannot become priests.
- Men take on leadership roles while women play important roles in family and community.

Anglican Church

- Men and women take up equal roles in church leadership and worship.
- The first male bishop was ordained in 2014. Women can become ministers and lead Christian congregations in worship.
- The Church of England voted to allow women to become bishops.
- In other Protestant denominations women play an important role in worship, ministers and leading acts of worship and reading services.

Muslim attitudes

- Women cannot be imams and lead men in prayer. Some Muslims claim that having a female imam would invalidate men's prayers.
- Some Sunni groups allow women to act as imams and lead prayers if the congregation is made up of other women or close family.
- There is increasing pressure from some to allow



Muslim attitudes

- The Hadith mentions the Prophet's wives leading prayers.
- The Qur'an does not mention whether females can act as an imam and lead prayers.
- An imam must be a good Muslim to lead a community in prayer. Therefore, gender should be irrelevant.
- Allah is against discrimination; therefore, gender should be irrelevant in the leading of prayer and congregations.



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SAME SEX RELATIONSHIPS

Christian attitudes to same-sex relationships

Same sex relationships cannot take place in Anglican Christian churches but can in non-conformist churches e.g. Quakers.

Many Christians oppose same sex marriage on Biblical scripture:

“If a man has sexual relations with a man as one does with a woman, both of them have done what is detestable. They are to be put to death.” (Leviticus 20:13)

“We know that the law is good if one uses it properly. We also know that the law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, for the sexually immoral, for those practicing homosexuality. “(1 Timothy 1:8-10)

Catholic Church

- Prohibit same sex marriage as sexual relationships can only occur between a man and woman.
- Pope Francis rejected a union of two people of the same sex.

Non-Conformists (E.g. Methodists and Quakers)

- Will allow same sex marriages to take place in churches.
- The focus is on the quality of the love and not who the love is between.



Muslim attitudes to same-sex relationships

Islam forbids same sex marriages and homosexual and lesbian relationships.

Sex should only take place between a husband and wife. Muslims regard marriage as the only place that sexual relationships can take place.

“And Lot when he said to his people “Do you commit such immorality as no one has preceded you with from among the worlds? Indeed, you approach men with desire, Instead of women. Rather, you are a transgression.” (Qur'an 7:80-81)

