PHILOSOPHY, BELIEFS & ETHICS (PBE)

YEAR 11

PAPER 1: ISLAM AND CHRISTIANITY
REVISION TIPS

1. **Start revising early** – revision is about going over information again and again. The more times you do this, the more you will remember. Cramming at the last minute cannot activate long-term memory.

2. **Take breaks** – studies suggest breaks every 45 minutes to an hour. Put a timer on and try and focus on completing that amount of revision. To begin with, you may only be able to do 15-20 minutes at a time. Keep practising and your focus will improve. When you begin a focused session, make sure you will not need to get up for any reason!

3. **Find out about yourself** – People tend to learn more at different times of the day and in different ways. Find out if you are a morning or an evening person and plan your day accordingly.

4. **Be organised and create a timetable** – Create a timetable to make sure you get through every topic in time. Give yourself manageable targets.

5. **Practise questions** – Make sure you get enough practice for each question type. You can even have a go at creating your own quiz or questions to help you prepare.

6. **Make mind maps or re-write notes** – Many people like to use mind-maps or write out notes on a table or in another form that works for them. Remember to summarise and write ideas in your own words as this helps you to remember them.

7. **Make revision cards** – There are different types of revision cards that can help you revise. Use larger cards to **summarise** key details. You must re-write information in your own words and in shortened form. Simply copying out information has been proven to be ineffective. Reading is also, according to studies, the least effective way of committing something to memory. You can also create very small cards with a key word or topic on one side and the definition or a few bits of information on the other. Use these to test yourself or your friends.
Paper 1 is on Beliefs: You have studied Christianity and Islam. There are two sections: one on ‘beliefs’ and one on ‘practices.’


1: DEFINITION (1 mark)
Multiple-choice definition - You just need to circle the correct answer.

2: GIVE TWO... DESCRIPTION (2 marks)
Give two examples / types - This just requires a simple sentence at most.

3: EXPLANATION OF TWO BELIEFS (4 marks)
You may need to explain two beliefs or two ideas. This requires that you only mention TWO and develop both sentences. They may ask you for two SIMILAR beliefs. These do not need to be the same, just quite similar to each other. They can also ask you for CONTRASTING beliefs. In this case, explain two different opinions.

4: EXPLANATION OF TWO BELIEFS + SCRIPTURE (5 marks)
5 very briefly developed points or 2 well-developed points = 5 sentences. You must use evidence and refer to both sides of the debate. You will lose 1 mark if you do not mention religion at least once.

5: EVALUATE (12 marks)
3-4 PDD chains = 12+ sentences
You must use evidence and refer to both sides of the debate.
You must refer to religious arguments.
You must give a conclusion at the end.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I can...</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Explain beliefs about the nature of God: God as omnipotent, loving and just, and the Trinity (God is one in three forms)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Describe the Problem of Evil and Christian responses to it</td>
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<tr>
<td>Explain different Christian beliefs about creation including the role of Word and Spirit (John 1:1-3 and Genesis 1:1-3).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Explain Christian beliefs about the afterlife and their importance, including: resurrection and life after death; judgement, heaven and hell.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Explain Christian beliefs about the Incarnation and Jesus as the Son of God</td>
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<td>Explain the importance of the crucifixion, resurrection and ascension for Christians</td>
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<tr>
<td>Explain beliefs about sin and salvation including law, grace and spirit</td>
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<tr>
<td>Explain the role of Christ in salvation including the idea of atonement.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Explain different forms of worship and their significance including the difference between liturgical, non-liturgical and informal worship, and private worship.</td>
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<td>Explain the importance of set and private prayer, including the Lord’s Prayer</td>
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<td>Explain the role and meaning of the sacraments including the significance of different types of baptism (infant and believers’) and different beliefs about and celebrations of Holy Communion/Eucharist</td>
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<tr>
<td>Explain the role and importance of pilgrimage and celebrations including the importance of pilgrimage to Iona and Lourdes, and the celebrations of Christmas and Easter.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Explain the role of the Church in the local community, including food banks and street pastors.</td>
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<td>Explain the place of mission, evangelism and Church growth.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Explain the importance of the worldwide Church including its work for reconciliation, responses to persecution and the work of one Christian charity e.g. Christian Aid</td>
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SAMPLE ANSWERS

1. What is meant by omnipotence? (1 mark)
   (A) Loving
   (B) All-powerful ✓
   (C) Just
   (D) All-knowing

2. Give two examples of places Christians visit on pilgrimage. (2 marks) Iona and Lourdes

3. Explain two reasons the Incarnation is important to Christians (4 marks) One reason is that it shows God suffered with people. Christians believe that God became a human and suffered a great deal which shows he understands human suffering and is with us.

Another reason is that it is believed to have saved people from sin (salvation). Christians believe that Jesus fixed the broken bond between God and humanity that began with Adam and Eve, so people could live on after death.

OR The harder type

3. Explain two contrasting ways Christians celebrate Eucharist (4 marks) One way is that the priest in Orthodox Churches breaks the bread behind a screen and it is shared later. The screen represents the divide between Heaven and Earth and the priest comes out from behind it during the service.

Another way is that Catholics will use bread and wine to symbolise Jesus but everyone has it and they usually use wafers instead of bread. Most people come to the front to receive the bread and wine which they believe becomes the body and blood.

4. Explain two beliefs about reconciliation (5 marks) Christians believe that Jesus always forgave and this makes reconciliation important. For example, in the Bible, Jesus said to ‘turn the other cheek’ rather than take revenge. This influences Christians such as in Corrymeela where they are working with young people.

Christians also believe that reconciliation is what God would want, even if it is difficult. They may try to forgive those who have sinned against them, as it says in the Lord’s Prayer.
5. ‘God cannot exist as there is too much evil and suffering in the world.’ (12 marks)

In your answer you:
• Refer to Muslim teaching
• Give detailed arguments to support this statement
• Give detailed arguments to support a different point of view
• Should reach a justified conclusion.

Christians disagree with the statement as they believe evil happens for a reason. In the Bible, Job was tested by Satan but evil helped bring Job closer to God and led to him receiving heavenly rewards. This suggests that evil could be a test of faith because it allows us to show that we can be good even in the face of evil. Another belief is that God created a good world but Adam and Eve disobeyed God and this led to evil. This is sometimes called ‘The Fall’ because they are said to have fallen from God’s graces. Some argue that because God gave humans free will, they have the opportunity to abuse it which is why evil exists.

However, atheists argue that not all evil can be explained by human free-will as there is too much evil for it to be fair and some people seem to be born evil. For instance, in the Holocaust, millions of Jews were killed which shows that evil can happen even to the most religious. It does not make sense to say that God would watch this happen, given that He is supposed to be omnibenevolent. Similarly, some scientists argue that some people are born more evil than others which suggests that some people do not have as much free choice as others.

Overall, whilst free will seems to be a good explanation for why evil exists, as people can choose bad or good, I still think that evil disproves God. This is because there is too much suffering, even amongst the religious, and because the free will argument cannot explain why some people appear to be born more evil than others.
“God created man in His own image” ['Imago Dei'] (Genesis 1:27)

“Be fruitful and multiply... Rule over every living thing” (Genesis 1:28)

“You shall not commit murder” (Exodus 20:13)

“You shall not lie with a man as with a woman “ (Leviticus 18:22)

“Honour your father and your mother” (Exodus 20:12)

“Eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth” (Exodus 21:24)

‘You shall have no other gods before me.’ (Exodus 20:2)

‘God so loved the world that he gave his one ad only Son, that whoever believes in him... Shall have eternal life’ (John 3:16)

‘In the beginning, God created the Heavens and the earth... And the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters’ (Genesis 1:1)

‘In the beginning was the Word.’ (John 1:1)

TEACHINGS OF JESUS

“Love your neighbour as yourself” (Luke 10:27)

‘I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.’ (John 14:6)

“Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her” (Mark 10:11)

‘Nothing is impossible with God.’ (Luke 1:37)

‘Do to others whatever you would like them to do to you.’ (Matthew 7:12)

TEACHINGS OF ST PAUL

Parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25)

“Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit... honour God with your body” (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)

“Women should remain silent in churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the Law says” (1 Corinthians 14:34)

“There is neither Jew nor Greek...you are all one in Christ” (Galatians 3:29)
THE TRINITY AND THE NATURE OF GOD

**Christians believe in the Trinity:** the belief that there is one God but that He is present in 3 different forms all at the same time. In the Gospel of John, found in the New Testament, it mentions creation again saying, ‘In the beginning was the Word.’ This means that Jesus was present from the very beginning alongside God the Father and the Holy Spirit. This, over time, lead to the belief that God exists in three forms **at the same time.** However, throughout the Bible, God is also referred to as **one.** This makes the religion **monotheistic** but the belief in the Trinity is unique to Christianity.

Christians believe that there is one God but that God’s nature has been revealed to humanity in three distinct ways: (1) as the loving creator who made the universe and who performs miracles; (2) as the saviour who was Jesus; and (3) as the Holy Spirit who is with people today. Christians believe that God is **beyond human understanding** so this is an attempt by humans to explain something which cannot be explained. The Trinity is often expressed as a triangle or even a shamrock to show that the three parts of God make up the one God.

**GOD THE FATHER:** Christians believe there is one God but that one of His forms is the Father. God the Father is believed to be the creator of the universe. In the creation story, it says that He made the universe in 6 days and rested on the 7th. It says He made all the plants and the animals and, finally, that He made humans. In the first creation story it says He made them in **imago dei** (His image).

Even though God is described as the Father, He is not male but a spirit. He is beyond description which means He cannot properly be described by humans as He is too great. However, Christians may use words such as omnipotent, omnibenevolent, just, immanent and transcendent to describe God.

**Omnipotent** means all-powerful. This means that it is not possible to be more powerful than God and that God’s power is infinite. God has unlimited authority which means He rules over everything. The Bible refers to God’s omnipotence throughout: it describes the miracles of God as well as His creation. When the Angel Gabriel tells Mary that she will become pregnant he says to her ‘nothing is impossible with God.’ God is all the creator of the world which shows omnipotence. Many Christians argue that the world is **so beautiful and suited to a purpose** it must have been **designed by God.**

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**TRINITY:** God is one but in three forms  
**MONOTHEISM:** Belief in one God  
**OMNIPOTENT:** All-powerful
God is also described as omnibenevolent or loving. Christians believe that God loves all creation. This is shown through sending His Son Jesus to the world so that He could save people from sin. Christians believe that the type of love shown by God and Jesus is agape love which means unconditional love for all people, no matter who they are; it is the sacrificial, selfless love shown for others.

God the Father is also described as just. Justice means distributing rewards and punishments fairly. This means that God knows more than anyone what is right or wrong and has given people commandments such as the Decalogue, or 10 Commandments. It also means treating people fairly and equally. Christians believe that God made humans in imago dei and, as such, they are all sacred. They believe that they must treat one another equally. Christians believe that God cannot behave unjustly which is why they believe there must be a reason for evil and suffering in the world.

These beliefs about God influence Christians in a number of ways. They believe that they have a personal relationship with God which influences them to pray and can give them hope and a sense of support. They also believe that God sent Jesus to save them from sin and they should try to live a Christian life by following God’s commandments and the teachings of agape love. For instance, the belief that God is loving and just may encourage Christians to give to charity and do other things to help those who are suffering. Christians also believe that God’s omnipotence was expressed when He made creation and they argue that they should look after humans who are sacred as well as the environment which God made.

Christians believe that the second part of the Trinity is Jesus. They believe that Jesus is fully God and fully human. The belief that God became a human is called the Incarnation, literally meaning ‘in the flesh.’ Christians believe that each part of the Trinity is unique so that each part is different, but they also believe that these parts are all God at the same time. Jesus is believed to have been born fully human; he led a sinless life, performing miracles and supporting the oppressed, and suffered, as humans do, in the hours leading to his death. Christians believe that Jesus came to save people from sin and sacrifice himself to restore the broken bond between humans and God.

The final part of the Trinity is said to be the Holy Spirit. Christians believe that once Jesus had left the earth, God sent the Holy Spirit to influence, guide and sustain all life. It is believed to be the unseen power of God at work in the world today. The Holy Spirit was also said to be present at creation and at the baptism of Jesus. It is often represented as a dove.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OMNIBENEVOLENT: All-loving</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>JUSTICE: Maintaining right and wrong through rewards and punishment; fairness</td>
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<td>DECALOGUE: 10 Commandments</td>
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The belief in the Trinity influences Christians in a number of different ways. They believe that God the Father was the creator of the world and is omnipotent and just. This encourages Christians to look after the environment and to see each human as sacred, made in the image of God. The belief in the second part of the Trinity, Jesus, also influences Christians to try not to sin and to show agape love. This may make them want to give to charity and do other things to help people. They may try to follow the teachings of Jesus, such as the teachings found in his parables. Belief in the Trinity may encourage Christians to try and lead good lives to increase their chances of going to Heaven. As such, they may try to follow God’s laws, such as the 10 Commandments and the Golden Rule. Belief in the Holy Spirit may also make Christians feel like God is with them each day; they may feel supported and very close to God, and try to pray to maintain this relationship.

It is important to note that other theists and atheists strongly disagree with the belief in the Trinity. For instance, Jews and Muslims do not believe that God comes in any other forms and believe it is blasphemous (sinful) to compare a human to God. Muslims see Jesus as a prophet whilst Jews believe the Messiah is yet to come. Thus, whilst Jews and Muslims (who form the other two Abrahamic religions) do believe that God is omnipotent, just and loving, they do not believe He came in human form.

Atheists, such as Richard Dawkins, also argue against these beliefs. Richard Dawkins argues that it makes no logical sense to say that God could be fully human and fully God at the same time; it is a logical impossibility. Atheists also argue that the world was not designed by God because scientific evidence shows it began with the Big Bang and that human life evolved over millions of years. They also argue that there is too much evil and suffering in the world and that this proves that God cannot exist and be omnibenevolent.
THE INCARNATION

The New Testament explains how God sent his only son, Jesus Christ, to restore the broken relationship between people and God which had been caused by human wrong doing. In Genesis, it says that Adam and Eve brought death and sin into the world by eating from the tree of knowledge. Jesus came to teach people God’s will for them, and to show them what life would be like in the Kingdom of God. He not only taught people about God, he showed them what God is like.

Although Jesus was born a human being, the Gospels describe his birth as a miracle. Christians believe that no sex was involved in Jesus’ birth! They believe that he was born through the power of God. This event is known as the Immaculate Conception (getting pregnant without having sex). It is also known as the Incarnation, the moment where ‘God becomes flesh.’ In the Gospel of Luke, women and shepherds are featured. Both of these groups were treated badly in society at the time suggesting that Jesus had come to save everyone and treat everyone with respect.

The Gospels are written accounts of what Jesus did, taught and achieved. There are four written by Mark, Matthew, Luke and John and these are found in the New Testament. Gospel means ‘Good News’ because the writers wanted to proclaim the news that Jesus was the Messiah and that his death and resurrection had brought salvation to the world. The Gospels say that when Jesus was about 30, he began his ministry, where he travelled through Palestine and taught. He preached about the Kingdom of God and how to live according to God’s will. He taught many parables: moral stories about how to behave using characters. Jesus’ teachings were seen as controversial at the time: he taught that the oppressed would occupy the kingdom of Heaven (such as the poor and women) and often clashed with Jewish authorities over his interpretation of the Torah (the Jewish Holy Book). It was also considered blasphemous (sinful) to compare oneself to God.

The Incarnation is extremely important to Christians. Christians believe that God became fully human so that He could save people from sin and restore the bond between God and humanity, broken during the Fall. They believe that this atoning act meant that Christians had the possibility of Heaven after death. In the Bible it says, ‘God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in him.. Shall have eternal life.’ This tells Christians that God greatly loved humanity and that they ought to love one another. By coming to the world as a human, God was better able to teach people about His commandments, such as the command to love everyone.

MESIAH: Saviour; someone who will come to restore the bond between God and humanity
ATONEMENT: The event whereby Jesus sacrificed himself to save people from sin
SALVATION: Saving people from sin
Jesus is particularly famous for his teachings of love and forgiveness. Jesus taught agape love which means love for everyone. He taught that he had lovingly come to ‘take away the sins of the world’ and to teach people to ‘love God with all your hearts.. And love your neighbour as yourself.’ He also taught that it was best to forgive. For example, as he was being crucified he said, ‘Father forgive them, they know not what they do’ and forgave the thief hanging next to him. He also told followers to ‘turn the other cheek’ which means to forgive rather than seek revenge. Jesus also taught his followers to treat others as you wish to be treated which is the Golden Rule.

The Parable of the Good Samaritan: Jesus told a story (parable) about a Samaritan (a member of a hated group at the time) who was looked after by someone – he said that this person was ‘his neighbour’ and that Christians should go and do the same thing. In the story, a Jewish man is lying on the side of the road, having been beaten up very badly. Several other Jewish holy men walk by without stopping but a Samaritan stops, bandages his cuts and takes him to an inn (a hotel) to be looked after. He pays for his stay. Jesus says that this is the kind of love people should show and says that we should ‘love thy neighbour.’

The Parable of the Sheep and the Goats: In the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats, Jesus says that anyone who helps the poor, hungry and prisoners is helping Jesus himself. In Matthew (25:31), Jesus taught that God will separate the sheep from the goats, symbolising the people who have helped others (the sheep) versus those who have not (the goats). Jesus taught that it is the duty of Christians to help the sick, the poor and those in prison for those who do so are doing them for Jesus as well.

The woman caught in adultery: In one passage written about Jesus, in the Gospel of John, some religious leaders called Pharisees bought an adulterous woman to see him. This means, the woman had cheated on her husband. In the Old Testament, the Law of Moses says that such women should be stoned to death. These men were trying to trick Jesus into breaking the law. But Jesus said, ‘Let he who is without sin cast the first stone.’ This was a very controversial thing to say, as Jesus was really saying that only people who have never made mistakes can judge others (so no-one!). We should, instead, show forgiveness to people and love. Jesus tells the woman to leave without punishment and simply says that she should try not to sin anymore.
Jesus’ teachings began when he was about 30 and lasted for around 3 years. During this time, he performed miracles and taught followers to show agape love and to treat others as they wish to be treated (the Golden Rule). In the Bible, Jesus is repeatedly referred to as the Son of God and says this of Himself. This was seen as blasphemous by those who did not follow him. Blasphemy was, according to Jewish law, punishable by death and is forbidden in the 10 Commandments. Jewish and Roman authorities had Jesus put to death by crucifixion. This is described in the Gospels and also described by other historians at the time.

Jesus is said to have known he was going to die. In the Last Supper, the Passover meal he shared with his disciples, Jesus said that he knew he was going to be betrayed by Judas. He also broke bread and drank wine with them and said that they should do this in remembrance of him when he was gone. He was later arrested and, as this was happening, one of the disciples cut the ear of one of the soldiers off. Jesus healed the man.

As he was dying, Jesus spoke to two men who were also being crucified. One asked for forgiveness and Jesus told him that he would go to Heaven. Jesus also asked God to forgive his killers saying, ‘Father forgive them, for they know not what they do’ (Luke 23:34). Thus, even when dying, Jesus taught forgiveness and love. Once Jesus was dead, and the Roman guards made sure that he was by putting their swords into his sides, he was buried in a tomb.

Christians believe that this death was more than just a political consequence but believe it has a religious reason (theological reason) behind it. Christians believe that Jesus had to die to save people from sin. Traditionally, Christians believe that Adam and Eve brought sin and death into the world and broke the bond between God and humanity. Humans are born sinful and lead sinful lives but Jesus was sent to teach them about God and to give them a chance to have everlasting life. Christians believe that he restored the bond between God and humanity and that his crucifixion represents a sacrifice. They believe that Jesus took the place of all sinners – this is called the atonement. The crucifixion also emphasises the importance of forgiveness and love and can give Christians a sense of solidarity and comfort, knowing that even God suffered as humans do.
RESURRECTION AND ASCENSION

According to the New Testament accounts of Jesus’ death, it is said that Jesus was killed and then, three days later, he rose again. Rising from the dead is known as resurrection. Christians believe that he was killed on the Friday of Sabbath (the day of rest) and this day each year is now known as Good Friday. When he rose from the dead, he is said to have appeared to women first, such as Mary Magdalene, another reminder for many Christians that Jesus came for the oppressed in society (those who were often treated badly). Angels told women and the other disciples that Jesus was risen from the dead. Over the next few days, Jesus appeared to his disciples which ensured that the news of his resurrection spread quickly.

One disciple, known as Doubting Thomas, refused to believe that he had seen Jesus until he had placed his hands inside the cuts in Jesus’ side, made by the Roman soldiers who had put their swords into him. As with many parts of the Bible, the resurrection is a matter of faith for Christians today. Many see Doubting Thomas as an example of why faith is important: even if they cannot see something with their own eyes, they should believe it. Others, of course, disagree with the idea of faith, arguing it is important to always check for evidence.

In Christian belief, salvation means being saved from sin, with the possibility of everlasting life. Christians believe that sin has separated humans from God and salvation enables humans to get close to God again. The Old Testament makes it clear that a person achieves salvation by having faith in God and obeying God’s commandments. Christians also believe that salvation happens as a result of grace. This is the belief that salvation is given by God. It cannot just be earned through good works; it is a gift from God of grace that allows people to go to Heaven. Christians believe that the death of Jesus made this possible as he atoned for the sins of humanity and saved them from sin. Whether Christians believe that the creation story is factually true or not, they see it as a story about human sin: humans are often tempted to sin and disobey God but this creates a gap between God and humanity. It is this gap that Christians believe Jesus bridged. The resurrection influences Christians by reminding them that Jesus came to save them from sin (salvation) and that they should follow God’s commands and hope for God’s grace.

Christians also believe that, 40 days after the resurrection, Jesus rose to Heaven to be with God. This event is known as the ascension. The event is important to Christians as it shows that Jesus is with God. It paves the way for the coming of the Holy Spirit to provide comfort and guidance and is seen as further biblical evidence for the existence of Heaven. The importance of the ascension is linked to the importance of the resurrection: both events show that death is not the end and that there is a possibility of everlasting life for those who follow God.
The Christian creation story is written in Genesis, the first book of the Bible. It says that there was nothing at the beginning but God created light on the first day and separated it from darkness. It describes how God created the world ex nihilo (out of nothing). The first story says that God ‘made mankind in His image... Male and female He created them’ (a belief known as imago dei – Genesis 1:27). This tells Christians that they are sacred (holy).

The second story names Adam and Eve as the first humans on earth. In this version of the story, Eve is made from Adam’s rib to be his helper. This is often interpreted literally (word-for-word) by more conservative Christians to suggest that women should be the helpers of men.

In the stories, God also tells Adam and Eve to ‘be fruitful and multiply’ (Genesis 1:28). This tells Christians that they should have children which they also promise in their wedding vows. Some Christians have interpreted this literally and argue that contraception is wrong because they should procreate (have children). They are also both told to be stewards (to look over the environment) and given dominion (authority or superiority) to use the environment to help them. This may seem contradictory but is traditionally understood as meaning that Christians must respect animals and the environment even though they are allowed to use them since they are superior. Sometimes, the argument from dominion is also used to argue in favour of scientific testing and for eating meat. The story also teaches them about sin. In the later part of the creation story it says that Eve was tempted by Satan, disguised as a snake, to eat forbidden fruit from the Tree of Knowledge. She then persuaded Adam to do the same. Both were banished from the Garden of Eden and the bond between God and humanity was broken. Original Sin and evil entered the world. This story is important to Christians in that it teaches them about why evil exists and why Jesus was necessary: to save people from sin. Some Christians do not believe the story is literal but see the snake as representing all forms of sin and disobedience against God.

The creation stories are also important because they tell Christians that all three parts of the Trinity were present at the moment of creation: it says that God the Father made the world and rested on the 7th day which shows that God the Father was present; it also says that the ‘spirit hovered over the water’ which shows that the Holy Spirit was present; and, finally, in the New Testament of the Bible, it is also written, ‘In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God’ which means Jesus was present. Scholars mostly agree that the ‘Word’ refers to God the Son, who entered history as Jesus. For this reason, scholars believe that this means the Holy Spirit and Jesus were all involved in creation. The Trinity has, then, existed since the beginning.

**DOMINION:** Ruling over the environment  
**STEWARDSHIP:** Taking care of the environment  
**THE WORD:** Refers to Jesus in the creation story
The story of Original Sin is found in Genesis 3. In the story, Adam and Eve disobey God’s command not to eat fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. They are tempted by a serpent who is said to represent Satan, or the Devil. He said that they would become like God Himself. This was the first sin. In doing this, they brought evil into the world and gained knowledge of sadness, guilt and shame. They both become aware of their nakedness; God no longer walks amongst them; they are banished from the Garden; they now experience death, along with all future generations; Eve is punished with painful childbirth; and Adam must work the land.

For many centuries, the story was taken literally and, today, some Christians still believe the story word-for-word. They thought that humans were all descended from Adam and Eve and that their disobedience tainted them with an inbuilt tendency to disobey God. The Church taught that baptism was necessary to remove Original Sin and give people the possibility of going to Heaven. Those who died before being baptised were often buried away from holy ground. St Augustine went so far as to suggest that sex passes Original Sin from one person to another. Many Christians believed that they were so sinful, that their only chance of being helped was to be forgiven and blessed by God. This kindness, of God choosing to ignore their sin, was known as grace. The word ‘grace’ occurs many times in the New Testament and refers to the unconditional love that God shows to everyone, even if they do not deserve it. Christians believed (and some still believe) that they do not deserve to go to Heaven but if they follow God’s law and if God bestows His grace upon them, then they can go to Heaven. God also offered salvation from sin and death through Jesus. Christians believe that Jesus sacrificed himself in place of all sinners, in an event called the atonement. As a result, all Christians were given the possibility of going to Heaven. Salvation is possible through following God’s law and as a result of Jesus and God’s grace.

Salvation through law is the belief that Christians can earn a place in Heaven by following God’s commands and the teachings of Jesus. It is also called ‘salvation through works.’ This means that Christians will try to follow the teaching of agape (unconditional Christian love) as well as the 10 Commandments. The belief is that if they work hard to be good Christians, they will earn a place in Heaven.

Salvation through grace: This is the belief that, even if Christians try to be good, they are never fully deserving of God’s love and kindness. Thus, in order to go to Heaven, God must give them His grace and lovingly accept them, even though they have sinned.

GRACE: A quality of God which God shows to humans by providing love and support; they do not earn it but it is given out of love by God e.g. Christians believe they can go to Heaven through God’s grace
In Genesis, the first book of the Bible, it describes the creation of the world. In Genesis Chapter 1, it says that God made the world in 7 days. In Genesis Chapter 2, it describes how Eve was made from Adam's rib. Atheists argue that these contradictions show the stories are not true. They also argue that the Big Bang theory and evolution show the world was not made in 6 days and that we were not made in the image of God. Christians have responded to the difference scientific theories in different ways. Some deny the theories whilst others have incorporated them into their beliefs.

Some Christians believe that the Bible is only metaphorically true – it contains important, symbolic messages but is not factually true. For instance, in Genesis 1:27 it says that God made mankind in imago dei (in His image) which suggests that we are sacred (very holy) even if it is not meant to be taken literally. The story can also teach them the importance of avoiding greed and not disobeying God.

Such Christians believe in theistic evolution (the idea that God caused the Big Bang and evolution). They believe that the Bible was written thousands of years ago when people did not know about science. It should not be looked at as a factual document. Science explains how the world began but religion explains why we exist and what our purpose is.

Other more conservative Christians are creationists. They believe that the Bible should be interpreted literally (word-for-word true), so the creation story in Genesis must be completely true too. This means they do not believe in evolution but think that God created the world in 7 days. Some believe that each day represents thousands of years but they still deny the scientific theories.

These Christians believe that it is not possible to accept scientific theories of evolution and the Bible as well as the teachings of the Bible. For instance, the Bible says humans were made in the image of God and does not say they evolved from apes. They argue that you should not pick-and-choose which parts of the Bible to accept and which to ignore.

**EVOLUTION:** The scientific theory that explains how organisms adapted to fit their surroundings over billions of years e.g. fossil record evidence

**BIG BANG:** The scientific theory that the world began with an enormous explosion of gases and matter

**CREATIONIST:** Someone who interprets the creation story literally i.e. word-for-word
Atheists argue that evil and suffering probe that God does not exist. They call their argument the Problem of Evil. It is the theory that if God is all the things that Christians say He is (omnipotent, omnibenevolent and omniscient) then evil would not exist. As evil does exist, the Christian God does not. Richard Dawkins argues that God does not exist because if He did there would not be so much evil in the world. Like other atheists, he points to examples such as the Holocaust, great famine in parts of the world and the death of babies and asks why a loving God would ever allow such things. Many atheists argue that God punishes people unfairly since bad things often happen to good people.

There are a range of theodicies that Christians use to explain the problem of evil. A theodicy is an explanation of why evil exists. Christians believe that God cannot behave unfairly because He is God. This means that evil must exist for a reason. Many Christians, for instance, argue it is a test of faith. In the Bible, a man called Job was tested by Satan. God allowed Satan to make him ill and take his family. Satan realised that he could not damage Job’s faith and stopped testing him. Evil helped bring Job closer to God and led to him receiving heavenly rewards. Even today, people can only show how truly good they are in the face of evil and suffering e.g. charity work, like the work of Christian Aid, after a natural disaster.

Others argue it is a result of ‘The Fall’. God created a good world but Adam and Eve disobeyed God and this led to evil. This is sometimes called ‘The Fall’ because they are said to have fallen from God’s graces. As a punishment for disobeying God, Adam and Eve were told that they, and future generations of humans, would suffer e.g. childbirth and hard work. Jesus was sent to clear people of evil by sacrificing himself. However, some people still choose to disobey God and these leads to evil. Finally, many Christians argue that evil is a result of human’s free-will. He said that people need to suffer because they must choose between good and evil. If they did not have the choice, they would be like obedient robots and God wants people to choose to worship him. God created humans in His image (‘imago dei’) but they still have to choose to grow into the perfect people God wants them to be.
CHRISTIAN BELIEFS ABOUT LIFE AFTER DEATH

THE AFTERLIFE: Christians believe there is an afterlife. Although the body dies and is buried or cremated, they believe that their unique soul lives on and is raised to new life by God. Their belief that Jesus rose from the dead three days after his crucifixion gives Christians hope that if they follow Jesus’ teaching and accept him as their Lord and Saviour, then this new resurrection life awaits them. By being born as a human being (the incarnation), and then dying on the cross, Jesus made this new ‘life after death’ possible for all. Christians believe that there is biblical evidence supporting the existence of an afterlife, such as the descriptions of Heaven by Jesus and St Paul. Some also believe in near-death experiences: where someone dies for a short time and has a vision of Heaven before coming back to life. Some theists (people who believe in God) say that they have also had religious experiences where they have heard God or seen angels.

Jesus said, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies.’
John 11:25-26

THE DAY OF JUDGEMENT: Christians believe that Jesus’ life on Earth had a purpose which was to announce that the rule (or ‘Kingdom’) of God was coming. Many Christians believe that, at the end of the world, Christ will come again to rule for 1000 years. They may also believe that there will be a Day of Judgement when God will judge people on how they have behaved. Christians believe that by God’s grace, they may receive a place in Heaven. Not all Christians believe that there will be a Day of Judgement like the one that is described in the Bible. However, Christians who have a literal interpretation (word-for-word) of the Bible believe that there will be a battle as the world ends, and that God will judge the good and the bad. In the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats, Jesus says that, as a shepherd divides goats from his flock of sheep, so God will divide the good from the bad. Those who have helped the sick, looked after the needy and visited prisoners, it is as though they have done it for Jesus.

RESURRECTION: Some Christians, including some Roman Catholics, believe in purgatory. This is an in-between state for the majority of people of waiting for heaven, a time of cleansing from sin and preparing for heaven. Roman Catholics also believe in the immortality of the soul. This is the belief that the soul will always live on. In the past, the Catholic Church used to sell ‘indulgences.’ These were said to be passes that allowed people to enter money if they paid the Church. This was one of the reasons that Martin Luther, who began the Protestant Reformation, opposed the Catholic Church. Many Christians believe that the whole body, and not just the soul, will live on, known as full-body resurrection. Protestants do not believe in purgatory but believe that, once the body has risen and the person has been judged, they will go to either Heaven or Hell.

RESURRECTION: Rising from the dead; the event whereby Jesus rose from the dead after 3 days
DAY OF JUDGEMENT: A day when God is said, at the end of the world, to judge people
PURGATORY: A place of waiting, or limbo, where Roman Catholics believe the soul goes to be cleansed
HEAVEN AND HELL: Christians disagree about what happens after death. They believe that God is just and fair, and so cannot let evil go unpunished. Most believe in the idea of judgement after death, and that God will treat people in the afterlife according to how they lived their life on earth. Salvation is the idea that God is prepared to forgive people of their sins and that this was made possible by the death and resurrection of Jesus. The traditional Christian belief is that if they feel sorry for what they have done (repent), they can achieve eternal life in Heaven. There is biblical evidence for life after death. Jesus and St Paul repeatedly talk about heaven and hell. Jesus says, ‘I am the way, the truth and the light... no one comes to the Father except through me.’

Although heaven is often mentioned in the Bible, it is rarely described. Christians therefore have very different ideas about it. Some believe that heaven is a physical place, where their body goes after death. Such Christians believe in full-body resurrection and think that the whole body will rise again on Judgement Day, when God will judge people on how they have lived their lives. Others believe that it is their soul that lives on (immortality of the soul), and that heaven is a state of being united with God. The Bible is even less specific about hell, and Christians have very different ideas about this too. Some Christians believe that hell is a place of suffering, and of separation from God. Others (perhaps most) believe that hell is a spiritual state of being separated from God for eternity.

While some Christians believe that only Christians can enter Heaven, others believe that all people who have behaved well can enter Heaven. Calvinists believe in predestination: the belief that, since God is all-knowing (omniscient), He already knows who will be saved at the end of the world. They believe that only a small number of people can enter Heaven. Others argue that an omnibenevolent God would not deny anyone Heaven.

ATHEIST RESPONSES: Atheists disagree with the idea of Heaven and Hell for a number of reasons. Many atheists argue beliefs in Heaven and Hell were invented to control behaviour and were thought-up in a time of little science. Dawkins argues that they are propaganda used by the Church to scare people. People used to have to pay lots of money to priests in order to ‘secure’ a place in Heaven. Perhaps belief is caused by fraud and trickery. Derren Brown has faked faith healings and performed other tricks to prove to the public that they are being tricked. He argues that people who claim to contact the dead or perform miracles are committing fraud (they are tricking people to make money). Many high-profile televangelists, such as Jim Bakker, have served time in prison for this.

Some evolutionary psychologists, like Richard Dawkins, also argue that experiences of ghosts are caused by tricks of the mind. In our evolutionary past, we needed to survive attack from predators. We may have evolved to see faces and feel a presence as this could keep us safe from potential attack. The ‘God Helmet’ is a device that can be placed on the head to stimulate the temporal lobe in the brain. When this is done, it causes religious hallucinations. Michael Persinger argued that religious experiences can be explained scientifically. There are also many logical problems with suggesting a non-physical element to the body, especially when we can see decaying bodies after death, and atheists often believe there is nothing more than we can actually see. They argue that we should not believe in anything we cannot prove. Atheists argue that an all-loving God would not send people to Hell, and, moreover, that there is no evidence that these actual places exist.

GRACE: A quality of God which God shows to humans by providing love and support; they do not earn it but it is given out of love by God e.g. Christians believe they can go to Heaven through God’s grace
**FESTIVALS AND PILGRIMAGE**

**FESTIVALS:** Festivals have an important role in helping Christians remember the major events of their religion. The Christian calendar has two main seasons: Advent, Christmas and Epiphany; and Lent, Easter and Pentecost. **Christmas** commemorates the Incarnation (the birth of Jesus and when God becomes human). It is celebrated in the UK on the 25th December. Trees are put up and homes are decorated with lights. The lights used symbolise Jesus as ‘the light of the world.’ Nativity scenes show the animals that were near Jesus when he was born, as it is written he was born in a stable. This reminds Christians of his **poverty** and the belief that he came to help the oppressed. He was visited by **shepherds** in the Gospel of Luke which also shows that he will be the Messiah and had come to save the oppressed, as shepherds were oppressed people at the time. In **Matthew**, he is visited by wise men who reveal that he will be the King of the Jews. As such, Christians often give presents to one another. They may also give to charity as they want to remember Jesus’ teaching to give to the poor and to show **agape** love. The reasons that Christmas is important are the same as the reasons for why the **Incarnation is important.** **Easter** commemorates the death and resurrection of Jesus. It celebrates Jesus triumphing over death and the Christian belief in salvation and atonement. Sometimes, Christians engage in processions where an actor carries the cross. They may also use lights to represent Jesus and eggs to represent new life. The reasons that Easter is important are the same as the reasons for why the **resurrection and crucifixion are important.**

**PILGRIMAGE:** A pilgrimage is a journey made for religious reasons, alone or with other Christians, to a sacred, or holy, place. This is a physical journey but also represents a **spiritual journey**. The journey gives many opportunities for prayer and worship. Christians may often visit the Holy Land in Jerusalem to see places that Jesus went to. They may also visit shrines connected with famous saints. Pilgrimage is important as: it helps Christians to grow closer to God and strengthen their faith; it helps them to express sorrow and ask for forgiveness; it connects them with their religious history and important Christian figures; it gives opportunities for prayer and worship; it often allows believers to seek a cure for illness; and also gives them a chance to meet other people who share their faith. **Lourdes** is a very famous site of pilgrimage in south-west France. It is dedicated to the Virgin Mary. In the 19th century, a girl called Bernadette visited the cave there and said that she had a vision of the Virgin Mary. She said that Mary told her in this religious experience to dig for water there. She encouraged the villagers to help her and, together, they found a spring. This spring is believed to have healing properties and thousands of pilgrims today go there in the hope of being cured. They often bathe in the water and recite prayers with other Christians. It is claimed that over 6000 cures have taken place. Another famous site is **Iona** which is an island off the west coast of Scotland. In the 6th century CE, St Columba brought Christianity to Scotland and established a community of monks there. It is now the home of the ecumenical Iona Community and a place of pilgrimage dedicated to the Virgin Mary. Ecumenical means that they are working to find a common form of Christianity with no separate denominations. Some people think Iona is a ‘thin place’ where the veil between the spiritual and the physical world is thin. Iona is remote and windswept and feels, for many pilgrims, like a place where **nature reveals God’s omnipotence.** Pilgrims are also asked to help out with daily chores and meals while staying with the community which can help them to show selflessness and feel a sense of community, and they also reflect and meditate throughout the day.
**THE SACRAMENTS**

**INFANT BAPTISM:** *Baptism* is an initiation rite by which people become members of the Christian Church. It is one of the sacraments which means it is an outward sign of an inner blessing. Catholics and Orthodox Christians believe there are seven sacraments: (1) baptism; (2) confirmation (where you confirm your faith in public); (3) Holy Communion (also known as Eucharist); (4) marriage; (5) confession to a priest; (6) becoming a priest; and (7) anointing, or blessing, the sick.

Many Christians often have infant baptisms. This is where they baptise babies. They believe that infant baptism shows *God’s grace* (God’s gift of love) and allows children to enter the Church at a very early age. Whilst the first Christians were often baptised as adults, today *Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican and Methodist* denominations, amongst others, practise infant baptism. Water is used to symbolise the forgiveness of sins and new life as a member of the Christian Church. Roman Catholics believe that everyone has inherited *Original Sin*. This is the sin that was brought into the world by Adam and Eve. They believe that everyone has a tendency to sin and needs salvation (saving) which baptism provides for babies. At an *infant baptism*, the parents and godparents promise to raise the child as a Christian. This ceremony is an important opportunity for them to make promises which the children can say themselves later in a *confirmation* ceremony. Candles represent Jesus as the ‘Light of the World.’

**BELIEVERS’ BAPTISM:** Some Christians, such as *Baptists* and *Pentecostalists*, think that a baby is too young to understand the meaning of baptism. They argue that people should wait to be baptised until they can make the decision themselves. Jesus was baptised as an adult by *John the Baptist* as water was also used in Jewish ceremonies. Many people follow this example and are baptised in large pools or rivers when they are older. Jesus’ baptism sets an example of being baptised to receive the *Holy Spirit*. Many people argue against infant baptism because they dislike the idea that *babies are born with sin*. The idea of Original Sin used to be so widely accepted that anyone who had not been baptised would not be buried on holy ground, including babies. Believers’ baptism involves full immersion in a pool, symbolising the cleansing from sin and the rising up to new life with Christ. Rites (what happens during the ceremony) vary but usually the minister talks about the importance of baptism and asks if the people being baptised are willing to change their lives. Each person may read a Bible passage and give a brief testimony of their faith in Jesus as their personal saviour. They are then put under the water whilst the minister says, ‘in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.’

**Baptism** is a highly significant event for Christians. It shows that they are a part of the Christian Church (when Church is spelt with a capital ‘C’ it means the whole Christian community). It shows that they are following in the footsteps of Jesus who was also baptised and that they will try to lead a good Christian life. It also unites them with other Christians.

**INFANT BAPTISM:** When someone is baptised as a child / **BELIEVERS’ BAPTISM:** When someone is baptised as an adult
**Eucharist:** The Eucharist, also known as ‘Holy Communion,’ is one of the sacraments. Roman Catholic and Orthodox Christians believe there are 7 sacraments in total. These are outward signs of an inner blessing or God’s grace. In the sacrament, bread and wine are used to remember Jesus. In the Bible it says that before Jesus died, he celebrated the Jewish Passover meal with his disciples (followers). This event is called the Last Supper. Jesus knew that he would be betrayed and killed and gave his final teachings to his disciples. He told them that he wanted them to ‘love one another as I have loved you.’ He also told them that they should eat bread in remembrance of his body and drink wine in remembrance of his blood. Christians believe that this helps them to receive God’s grace and to remember the importance of Jesus. Since they do it together, it unifies the Christian community and shows that they are all equal in the eyes of God.

**Roman Catholic Service:** Catholic Christians believe that the Eucharist (Holy Communion) is one of seven sacraments. These are outward signs of inner blessing or God’s grace. They remember the sacrifice of Jesus who they believed died on the cross to save them from sins (salvation). This is also known as atonement. In a traditional Catholic ceremony, there are three readings from the Bible. These are from the Old Testament, Paul’s letters and the Gospels. Everyone says the Lord’s Prayer in Catholic Churches as well as prayers of penance and praise where they say sorry and give thanks. Catholics believe that the bread and wine are transformed into Christ’s blood and body, whereas other Christians, such as most Anglicans, do not. The congregation can see the bread and wine being prepared and watch the priest as he prays over the bread and wine saying, ‘Take this, all of you, and eat it: this is my body.’ Members of the congregation are given bread during the service as well as wine. They then give everyone else a ‘sign of peace’ by shaking hands as they go around the room. At the end, the Catholic priest blesses the people and says, ‘Go in peace.’

**Orthodox Service:** Orthodox Christians believe that the service represents heaven on earth. Most of the service takes place behind a screen called an iconostasis which represents the divide between heaven and earth. The priest comes through the Royal Doors chanting the Gospel. He says the words that Jesus said at the Last Supper behind the Royal Doors. Everyone says the Lord’s Prayer in Orthodox Churches as well as prayers of penance and praise where they say sorry and give thanks. They also believe that the bread and wine become the body and blood, as well as that the Holy Communion is a shared meal to show that everyone is equal. The bread is divided in four: three parts are blessed and the fourth part is broken into very small pieces which is given to the congregation on a spoon once the priest has come out from behind the screen. Members of the Orthodox congregation are given the unblessed bread (unblessed) to take home as a sign of being part of the community.

**Liturgy:** A set service where the same words and prayers are used each time

**Eucharist:** One of the 7 sacraments and another way of saying ‘Holy Communion’; it is where bread and wine are used to remember Jesus

**Prayers of Penance:** Prayers where one says sorry for what they have done wrong
Worship is the way in which Christians show their love and respect for God; it is a way of showing their beliefs, often with other Christians. Worship allows Christians to praise God and to say thanks. It also gives them the opportunity to ask for forgiveness. Prayers of penance are prayers where Christians say sorry.

Christians often worship in a church but disagree with how best to worship God. Some Christians prefer worship that follows a set structure. This means it does not change. This is called liturgical worship. Some people prefer to use a structure that changes a little (non-liturgical worship) or a completely informal structure that changes completely each time (informal worship).

**LITURGICAL WORSHIP:** This is worship that follows a set pattern each time. In this, a priest will lead a congregation in formal prayers that have set responses. Bible passages are read out, particularly from the gospels and there may be a sermon based on these. During the service there will often be music, hymns sung by the congregation or choir, or sometimes chanting by the priest. An example of liturgical worship is the celebration of the Eucharist for Catholic Churches, Anglican and Orthodox Churches. Liturgical worship will usually take place in a church but could also take place in other settings, such as in a person's home if they are sick and are being blessed by the priest. Some Christians may prefer liturgical worship because it offers them a sense of structure and comfort, since it is the same every week. They know what to expect even if they go to a new service and can easily remember the words. It is also important as the ritual has been passed down through generations, giving a sense of tradition. The fact that millions of people are also saying the same prayers, often at similar times, can also make Christians feel unified with other Christians.

**NON-LITURGICAL WORSHIP:** Others find that liturgical worship is a little old-fashioned for them and they want something that has elements of structure but also some elements of change. In non-liturgical worship, there does not have to be a set order or ritual. In Nonconformist churches such as Baptist Churches, those planning the service may chose an order to suit a theme. Nonconformist churches place an emphasis on the word of God in the Bible. The basic structure of the service might remain the same each week, but the preacher may change the order, the number of hymns or types of prayer. They may change the service depending on what has gone on that week, for instance.

**LITURGICAL WORSHIP:** Set worship where the hymns, prayers and other words follow a set structure / **NON-LITURGICAL WORSHIP:** Some elements of set structure and other elements of worship are more informal
INFORMAL WORSHIP: Informal worship is also known as ‘charismatic worship.’ Informal worship may depend on people’s spontaneous prayers or sharing of thoughts. Quaker worship is mainly silent, and people speak when they feel God’s spirit moving them to offer thoughts, prayers or a reading from the Bible. Community or house churches meet to eat together and share their faith to recreate what they believe to be the worship of the Early Church. The Pentecostal Church is ‘charismatic’ (spirit led) and may involve lots of activities, including speaking in tongues. These worshippers feel that it is easier to experience God’s Holy Spirit in informal worship. Evangelical churches or Pentecostalist churches are often much more charismatic in style and have become popular for their use of pop bands or more modern music, as well as informal style, such as the Hillsong Church.

PRIVATE WORSHIP AND PRAYER: Like all forms of worship, private worship will be focused on the Bible. Christians will generally use private worship at home and go to public worship as well. It can also be liturgical in style, such as saying the Lord’s Prayer or using set prayers from a prayer book. For example, Christians may use prayer beads, known as a rosary. This can remind them of their prayers and of how many they should do. For instance, a Catholic may repeatedly use the rosary beads to say ‘Hail Mary’ prayers or ‘The Lord’s Prayer’ a set number of times. Prayers can also be used to communicate with God, to say thanks, to ask for forgiveness and to ask for advice. Christians may also use meditation and focus on an object, such as an image or a candle. Set prayers, such as The Lord’s Prayer, can also help with helping Christians to really focus their minds on God and lose a sense of everything else around them. This is because chanting can make people really focus.

Prayer and worship are very important to Christians. They allow Christians to communicate with God, in the case of prayer, and to express their devotion to God. Worshipping with others helps to unify Christians and, in the case of liturgical worship, connects them to traditions as they repeat the same words that other Christians have said for many years. Worship can also give Christians a sense of peace. The effect of chanting, performing rituals or remaining silent in prayer can have a meditative effect and calm people down.

It is a way of showing love and respect for God and for asking for God’s blessings and grace. Christians can say sorry for what they have done which can help them reflect on their mistakes. Prayer and worship can also give a sense of hope as they ask God to look after them and try to connect with God. Worship and prayer can strengthen belief and remind Christians of their faith.

LITURGICAL WORSHIP: Set worship where the hymns, prayers and other words follow a set structure / NON-LITURGICAL WORSHIP: Some elements of set structure and other elements of worship are more informal
THE LOCAL CHURCH: FOOD BANKS AND STREET PASTORS

STREET PASTORS: Jesus taught the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats. In this Parable, he taught that God would separate the good from the bad on the Day of Judgement, as a shepherd separates goats from his herd of sheep. Those who are kind, who help the needy, who visit prisoners, look after the sick and who feed the hungry it is as though they are doing it for Jesus. This teaching encourages many Christians to go and work in the local community. Street pastors aim to help and care for vulnerable people in practical ways, working closely with police and councils in local communities. Wearing a blue, reflective ‘Street Pastor’ uniform, their aim is not to actively preach but to provide a positive service. This work includes listening to people’s problems, giving guidance regarding agencies which might be able to help and discouraging anti-social behaviour. They are supported by Prayer Pastors who pray for them and the work that they are doing. For example, Rev. Les Isaac began a network of Street Pastors in Brixton with 18 volunteers. They were supported by a local charity. They patrolled the streets in urban areas to challenge gangs and the use of knives and guns. Another example is the work of Parish Nursing Ministries UK, a Christian charity who go into the community looking for early health problems, helping people who are lonely or giving support to those who need help during a crisis.

FOOD BANKS: A food bank is a non-profit, charitable organization that distributes food to those who have difficulty purchasing enough food to avoid hunger. Food banks also offer a lot more than food. Volunteers provide a listening ear to clients over a warm drink, and signpost people to other charities and agencies who can help resolve the underlying cause of the crisis. Christians follow the teachings of Jesus, such as agape love. This is unconditional love for others. In the Parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus taught that everyone is one’s neighbour and that you should act selflessly and help others.

The Trussell Trust and the Salvation Army are both food banks that provide emergency food, help and support to those in crisis in the UK. There are hundreds of such food banks in the UK. Based on the Christian principles, shown in the Parable of the Sheep and the Goats, the aim is to bring people together (religious and non-religious) to work towards ending poverty and hunger in Britain. Non perishable food is donated to the food banks by churches, supermarkets, schools and businesses. Doctors and other health workers identify people in crisis and issue a food voucher so they can get food.

‘For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a strange and you invited me in, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in Prison and you came to visit me.’
(Mathew 25:35-36)

CHURCH: (1) A holy building used by Christians for worship; (2) the worldwide Christian community
PARABLE: A story with a moral message told by Jesus (a message about how to behave)
MISSION AND CHURCH GROWTH: When ‘Church’ is spelt with a capital ‘C’ it refers to the whole Christian community. The early Church did not have buildings to worship in but simply gathered together. From its early roots, Christianity has grown into the largest religion in the world. 1 in every 3 people is a Christian. Estimates are that around 2.5 billion people are Christian. There are many different denominations, and Catholics make up the largest. They are led by the Pope, who lives in the Vatican City in Rome. In England, the official religion is Church of England, a Protestant denomination begun by Henry VIII.

Mission refers to the vocation or calling of a religious organisation or individual to go into the world and spread faith. Most Christians believe they have the responsibility to tell others of their faith. This may be spreading the word to people they meet in everyday life or for some, through organised events or preaching. In the Bible, it says, ‘Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded for you’ (Matthew 28:19-20). This makes many Christians believe that they must go and convert others: encourage them to change their beliefs. Others feel the need to go to other countries and become missionaries, which involves spreading the Christian gospel by public preaching (evangelism). The main aim is to persuade people to accept Jesus as their Lord and Saviour and to extend the Church to every nation of the world. This idea is clear at the end of Matthew’s Gospel, when Jesus instructs his followers to spread his teachings. This is known as The Great Commission. Christians disagree about the extent to which they should try to convert others as some want to avoid causing offence to others. The Christian Church also has a history of forced conversion where people in colonies were forced to adopt Christian beliefs. That said, the Roman Catholic Church and other denominations argue that, so long as it is done respectfully, conversion is a duty.

RECONCILIATION: Another important role of the worldwide, or global, Church is reconciliation. This means restoring harmony after relationships have broken down. This could be in the form of confession, which is one of the sacraments, or in reconciliation between groups in society. The primary mission of the worldwide Church is to proclaim that Jesus came to restore the bond between, or reconcile, God and humanity. Christians believe that sin caused this relationship to break down and separated the world from God. Jesus came to change this: by taking the place of sinners (atonement) he ensured that people had the possibility of salvation and might go to Heaven. Through God’s grace, people were given the chance of everlasting life. Thus, part of the work of the worldwide Church is to reconcile people with God by passing on this message.

Reconciliation can also be a part of ending conflict. Christians believe that Jesus taught forgiveness. When he was being crucified, he asked God to forgive those who had hurt him and in his many parables he taught that forgiveness was necessary. He also taught agape love and to ‘turn the other cheek.’ In 1940, during the Second World War, Coventry was very badly bombed. Local Christians decided to forgive those responsible and, today, the cathedral has become a world centre for reconciliation. The community calls itself the Community of the Cross of Nails and now works to bring peace to other countries too.
Another example of reconciliation is the **Corrymeela Community**, begun by a priest in the 1960s. He had witnessed bombing during the Second World War and started the community in Belfast, an area of Ireland where there has been a great deal of fighting. He was concerned about discrimination between Catholics and Protestants and his aim was to establish an ‘open village’ where Irish people could come together to learn about each other and learn to live in peace. He continued his work with other volunteers throughout ‘The Troubles,’ the three-decade long conflict in Northern Ireland. He worked with families who need support as well as teenagers affected by the conflict in schools. The Corrymeela Project is currently applying what they learnt in Northern Ireland to help people in Israel and Palestine.

**CHRISTIAN PERSECUTION:** Christians have a long history of being **persecuted**. When Christianity first developed out of Judaism, early Christians were often killed by some Jewish or Roman leaders at the time. Many Christians were killed by Roman leaders, who worshipped many gods, in **amphitheatres**. The **Icthus fish** symbol – a key symbol in Christianity - was used as a secret symbol for Christian meetings. Christians were also persecuted during **Communist** rule in the USSR. ‘Brother’ Andrew was shot in the ankle when he worked for the Dutch Army and, during this time, converted to Christianity. In 1952, he went to a Bible college in Glasgow before travelling to Warsaw in Poland, an area under Communist rule where religion was banned. Christians were being persecuted and Brother Andrew travelled through Eastern Europe, smuggling in Bibles and other Christian literature, despite the risk of arrest, assault and imprisonment. It is estimated that he has helped Christians in 125 countries. He helped to start the organisation, **Open Doors** which helps Christians who are persecuted around the world. Open Doors offers counselling, food, shelter and training courses for **refugees** who are fleeing persecution. The organisation also campaigns for religious freedom, fundraises and distributes Bibles, often in secret.

Many Christians try to respond to persecution by **helping others, such as by giving to charity, and by preaching peace**. Jesus’ sacrifice is seen as an inspiration to many Christians who have given their lives to helping others. St Paul likened members of the Church to different parts of the body, writing that ‘if one part suffers, every part suffers with it.’ For this reason, many Christians preach peace to others and argue that they must try to end conflict.

**WORLD POVERTY:** Most Christians argue that **wealth must be shared**. In the Bible, Jesus is said to have argued that it is **easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter Heaven**. Jesus taught **agape love** and told his followers to ‘love thy neighbour.’ He also taught that people should act as ‘Good Samaritans' helping those in need. The charity **CAFOD**, a Catholic charity, is currently working in South America to educate young girls and provide them with opportunities so that they are not forced into sexual exploitation. They also help those who are persecuted as well as victims of war and natural disaster. For instance, they provide food, water and shelter for those who are in need. They also run campaigns where they discuss peace. They lobby employers for fair pay and campaign on behalf of disadvantaged communities.

**PERSECUTION:** Targeting a group in society because of a protected characteristic, such as religion /

**RECONCILIATION:** A sacrament for Catholics; restoring relationships that have broken down
# CONTRASTING BELIEFS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Some Christians...</th>
<th>Other Christians...</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>BAPTISM</strong></td>
<td>Some Christians, such as Catholics, believe that babies should be baptised as they are born with Original Sin and it gives families the opportunity to promise to raise their child in the faith.</td>
<td>Other Christians believe that people should be baptised when they are older (Believers’ baptism) so that they can choose for themselves.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>HOLY COMMUNION</strong></td>
<td>Catholics follow a liturgy that involves prayers of penance and three readings from the Bible (the Old Testament, St Paul and the Gospels). They believe that the bread and wine become Jesus. The bread is blessed in front of everyone and members of the congregation (the audience) come to receive Holy Communion.</td>
<td>Unlike Catholics, the service for Orthodox Christians mostly takes place behind a screen which represents the divide between Heaven and Earth. Real bread is broken up and handed out on a spoon.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>WORSHIP</strong></td>
<td>Some Christians, such as Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox and Church of England, use a set liturgy. This means that they use set hymns and prayers and the order of service is the same.</td>
<td>Other Christians, such as the Quakers or Pentecostalists, use informal worship where the structure changes each time. This is called charismatic worship too.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>PRAYER</strong></td>
<td>Some Christians engage in set prayer, such as using the Lord’s Prayer, or using rosary beads to help them say ‘Hail Mary’ prayers a set number of times.</td>
<td>Other Christians will use informal prayer more where they say whatever is on their mind. They ask for forgiveness and say thanks.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>HEAVEN AND HELL</strong></td>
<td>Some Christians believe in a literal interpretation of the Bible, including the story of the end of the world found in Revelation. They believe Jesus will come to rule again for 1000 years and God will punish those who did not believe in Him. These Christians believe that it is their duty to convert others so that people can go to Heaven.</td>
<td>Other Christians do not agree that an omnibenevolent God would punish people harshly. They may believe that everyone has the opportunity to be saved. They may also believe that conversion is not as important.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>CREATION</strong></td>
<td>Some Christians believe in a literal interpretation of the Bible, including the creation story. They are called creationists.</td>
<td>Other Christians only believe the creation story is metaphorical. They believe it contains spiritual but not factual truths.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Explain the six articles of faith in Sunni Islam and five roots of Usul ad-Din in Shi’ā Islam, including key similarities and differences</td>
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<tr>
<td>Explain characteristics ascribed to God: The Oneness of God (Tawhid), Qur’an Surah 112; omnipotence, beneficence, mercy, fairness and justice (Adalat in Shi’ā Islam); immanence and transcendence.</td>
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<td>Explain the nature and role of angels, including Jibril and Mika’il</td>
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<td>Explain Muslim attitudes to predestination and human freedom and its relationship to the Day of Judgement.</td>
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<td>Explain beliefs about life after death (Akhirah), human responsibility and accountability, resurrection, heaven and hell.</td>
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<td>Explain beliefs about prophethood (Risalah) including the role and importance of Adam, Ibrahim and Muhammad.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Explain beliefs about the holy books: the Qur’an and its revelation and authority, and the Torah, the Psalms, the Gospel, and the Scrolls of Abraham.</td>
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<td>Explain the six articles of faith in Sunni Islam, the five roots of Shi’ā Islam, including the authority of the Imamate, and evaluate differences between them.</td>
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<td>Explain the Five Pillars of Sunni Islam and the Ten Obligatory Acts of Shi’ā Islam</td>
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<td>Explain the Shahadah and its place in Muslim practice.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Explain Salah and its significance, as well as key differences in the practice of salah in Sunni and Shi’ā Islam, and different Muslim views about the importance of prayer.</td>
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<td>Explain Sawm: the role and significance of fasting during the month of Ramadan including origins, duties, benefits of fasting, the exceptions and their reasons, and the Night of Power, Qur’an 96:1–5.</td>
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<td>Explain Zakah: the role and significance of giving alms including origins, how and why it is given, benefits of receipt, Khums in Shi’ā Islam.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Explain Hajj: the role and significance of the pilgrimage to Makkah including origins and how hajj is performed</td>
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<td>Explain and evaluate the lesser and greater jihad in Islam.</td>
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<td>Explain the festivals of Eid-ul-Adha, Eid-ul-Fitr and Ashura, and their importance for Muslims.</td>
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 SAMPLE ANSWERS

1. How many Obligatory Acts are there in Shi’a Islam? (1 mark)
   (A) 4
   (B) 10 ✓
   (C) 7
   (D) 5

2. Give two examples of places Muslims visit on Hajj. (2 marks) The hills of Safa and Marwa / the Ka’aba

3. Explain two ways in which a belief in the importance of prayer influences Muslims (4 marks) One way is that it teaches Muslims to focus on God throughout their daily lives. As they pray five times a day, this means that Muslims regularly take time out of their daily routines to think of God.
   
   It also influences Muslims to be kinder to others as they must ask for forgiveness and say sorry. This will remind them to show kindness to others and avoid doing bad things.

   OR The harder type

3. Explain two contrasting beliefs about the Imamate. (4 marks)

   Sunni Muslims do not accept the Imamate as they believe that the first successor after the Prophet Muhammad was Abu Bakr. They follow his teachings and the six articles of faith.

   Conversely, Shi’a Muslims follow the Imamate and this is part of their 10 Obligatory Acts. They believe that Ali was the first rightful Imam after the Prophet Muhammad, as they were related.

4. Explain two beliefs about the Prophet Muhammad (5 marks) Muslims believe that Prophet Muhammad taught people that there is one God which Muslims still believe today. They believe that God revealed the words of the Qur’an to Muhammad and told him to believe in tawhid (one God). His perfect example is also written down in the Hadith which Muslims follow today.

   They also believe that he is important as he set up the first Islamic empire which helped spread the religion. This was important as people around the world converted to Islam and learnt about the Qur’an.
5. ‘The Qur’an is the most important holy book.’ Evaluate this statement (12 marks)

In your answer you:
• Refer to Muslim teaching
• Give detailed arguments to support this statement
• Give detailed arguments to support a different point of view
• Should reach a justified conclusion.

In Islam, there are a number of holy books, many of which are also important to Christians and Jews. Christians would argue that the Gospel is the most important holy book. It contains the teaching that Jesus is the Messiah who will come at the end of the world. However, the version that Christians accept is different to that of Muslims, as they believe that Jesus was also the Son of God. Therefore, for Muslims, this would not be a very significant argument.

On the other hand, the Qur’an is thought to be the unchanged, literal word of God, which was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad by Angel Jibril over a period of 22 years. Unlike the Psalms, Torah and Gospel, it is without error and is used to create Islamic Law. Muslims believe that it contains many important teachings, such as the command, ‘Whoever has killed one soul, it is as though they have killed all of mankind.’ This gives Muslims the idea that life is sacred.

Overall, I would certainly argue that the Qur’an is the most important book, even though the Psalms, Torah and Gospel are still important. The Qur’an is the basis for Muslim beliefs about the sanctity of life and is used to create Shar’ah Law. It is, unlike the other books, without error in the minds of Muslims.
USEFUL QUOTES

“He is Allah, the One, Allah is Absolute... There is nothing comparable to Him” (Qur’an, Surah 112)

“Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but the messenger of Allah and the Seal of the Prophets” (Qur’an 33:40)

“We are closer to human than his jugular vein” (Qur’an 50:16)

“And He is with you wherever you may be” (Qur’an 57:4)

‘Indeed Allah commands you towards justice’ (Surah 16:90)

‘He who is the All-knowing, the All Powerful, able to do anything’

“The earth is green and beautiful, and Allah has appointed you his stewards over it” (Hadith)

“All mankind is descended from Adam and Eve” (Hadith)

“Whosoever has killed a soul, it is as though he has murdered all of mankind” (Qur’an 5:32)

“The search for knowledge is the duty of every Muslim, male or female” (Hadith)

“Destroy not yourselves. Surely Allah is ever merciful to you” (Qur’an 4:29)

“No one dies unless God permits. The term of every life is fixed” (Qur’an 3:125)

“Kill the one that is doing it and also kill the one that it is being done to” [teaching on homosexuality] (Hadith)

“All people are as equal as the teeth of a comb” (Hadith)

“Pilgrimage to the House is a duty owed to God by people who are able to undertake it.” (Qur’an 3:97)

“Fasting is prescribed for you as it was for those before you that you may learn self-constraint.” (Qur’an 2:183)

“You should not kill your children for fear of want” (Qur’an 17:31)

“Recite in the name of your Lord who created man from a clot of blood..” (Qur’an 96:1–5)
Tawhid: Muslims believe Islam as a religion has always existed and was gradually revealed to different prophets throughout history, ending with the Prophet Muhammad. It was first revealed to the Prophet Adam. The word, ‘Islam’ in Arabic means ‘peace’ and ‘surrender.’ Muslims believe that they should surrender to the will (want/desire) of God. One of the most important beliefs for Muslims is in the oneness of God. This is the belief that there is one God (monotheism) and because there is just one God who has created all things, the world is in perfect balance. In the Qur’an, it says, ‘He is God the One, God the eternal... no one is comparable to Him.’

This belief is represented in the Shahadah: the Muslim declaration of beliefs where they say that they believe in one God and that the Prophet Muhamad is His messenger. Muslims believe that comparing anything or anyone to God is to commit the sin of shirk (blasphemy). As such, Muslims do not try to draw God, in most denominations, as this would be to compare God to a human piece of art. They use symmetrical patterns to show how, since there is one God, the world is perfectly balanced. Belief in one God can make Muslims care more about the environment and about others as they believe they should not disrupt the balance that God has made. They also believe that the world, and all wealth in it, belongs to Allah. The belief in the oneness of God is called tawhid.

The supremacy of God’s will: For Muslims, God is the one and only creator and controller of everything. Muslims believe that nothing happens without God knowing it will happen because He is omniscient (all-knowing) and all-powerful (omnipotent, or Al-Qadeer). Muslims can be secure in the knowledge that God wills everything to happen and that it happens for a reason. Muslims often say, ‘Inshallah’ which means ‘God willing,’ or ‘if God wants it to be so it will happen.’ This reminds Muslims that God is in control. Some Muslims believe that God knows everything that will happen and this takes away human free will (predestination or Al-Qadr) while other Muslims believe that God knows all the possible choices we might make but it is ultimately our decision. As humans have free will, they must be held accountable (responsible) for their actions and will be judged at the end of the world. For Muslims, it is not enough just to believe in one God: they must show their belief in the way they live their lives. This means that only God should be worshipped. Muhammad is respected as a prophet but is not worshipped as this would be seen as idolatry, or idol worship. Muslims must never make anything in their lives more important than God including money. In the Qur’an, it says ‘misfortunes can only happen with God’s permission’ so it is important that Muslims understand that the world, their lives and their fortunes are all in God’s hands.

**TAWHID:** Oneness of God / **MONOTHEISM:** Belief in one God / **SUPREMACY OF GOD’S WILL:** God has ultimate power and is in charge of everything
Immanence and transcendence: Muslims believe that God is both immanent (close, personal) and transcendent (beyond human understanding). In the Qur’an, it says that God is closer to humans than their ‘jugular veins’ and that God is ‘with you wherever you may be.’ This suggests that God has a personal relationship with humans and knows them entirely. This can make Muslims feel like they are special and that God is watching over them. It also tells them that He will hear their prayers and know of everything they do, whether good or bad. However, God is also transcendent, which means humans cannot know Him and He is beyond human understanding. God has no beginning or end (He is infinite) and is beyond time and space. He is separate to the world but can also control the world. This belief is also important as Muslims believe they should not try and play God, in the case of medical ethics for instance, or compare anything to God, as it is impossible to know God fully.

Omnibenevolence and mercy: In Islam, God is known as the Beneficent (Al-Rahman) and the Merciful (Al-Rahim) which means that Allah is kind, compassionate and forgiving. Muslims believe that evil and suffering in the world are a test where they have the opportunity to show their faith in God and help others to show that they can also be loving and kind. God is said to be omnibenevolent, which means all or infinitely loving. Allah is said to have sent prophets as guides to the right path which allows humans to know what God wants from them. God’s mercy is also said to be reflected in the rules within the Qur’an which also says that those who pray and ask for forgiveness can be forgiven by God. Muslims also believe that God never leaves them alone and may even act, through miracles, to help them. Muslims are influenced by these beliefs when they act mercifully to others and forgive them. For instance, under Shari’ah (Islamic) law, Muslims are often given the option of forgiving criminals who have wronged them. Muslims are also encouraged to forgive others in their daily lives and give to charity. They should pray and ask for God’s mercy.

Fairness and justice: ‘Adalat’ in Islam means fairness and doing what is right and just. Adalat, or justice, is one of the five roots of Shi’a Islam and is very important to Sunni Muslims as well. Muslims believe that Allah can do no wrong and that He is just. Humans must accept that God will punish those who have done wrong and reward those who have done well. Justice can also be about forgiveness and giving second chances. Muslims are commanded to be just and fair in their actions. In the Qur’an it says, ‘and let not hatred of any people seduce you that you deal not justly’ which suggests that justice is very important. The Qur’an also says that God will treat people mercifully if they have treated each other fairly as well. This belief influences Muslims in their life to try and do the right thing and to behave fairly as well. Justice is a key part of Shari’ah, or Islamic, law. For example, there are set punishments for different crimes and rules for how to behave. Muslims must also avoid doing unfair things such as gaining lots of money through unfair taxes as this is banned in Islam.

Muslims believe that the justice of Allah is absolute. Everything belongs to Allah so humans can never lose anything. Humans only have things by the grace of God. At least 40 verses of the Qur’an discuss the justice of Allah. It is also said that on the Day of Judgement, Muslims will be judged based on how they have behaved in their lives. Even though God knows all the possible ways that people could behave, they have the final choice in deciding how they will act. This is why humans will be held accountable for their actions on the Day of Judgement.
BELIEFS ABOUT THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD

Scripture is the most important type of revelation for Muslims. The Qur’an is regarded as a special revelation from God (Allah) to the Prophet Muhammad. Born around 570 CE in Mecca (in Saudi Arabia), Muhammad (pbuh) became an orphan at an early age. He was brought up by his uncle and married his employer Khadijah, who was a widow. From an early age, he went to a cave on Mount Hira to pray. In 611 CE the Prophet Muhammad was meditating when the Angel Jibril appeared to him. Muhammad could not read but three times Jibril ordered him to ‘recite’. Over the next 20 years, he received further revelations (information from God) and these were combined to form the Qur’an. Muslims believe that God’s message had become distorted over the years and that Muhammad received and wrote down the final correct version.

Muhammad remained unable to read and the Qur’an was written down by his friends and followers. The Qur’an has 114 Surahs (or chapters). The words are seen as the word of God and the Qur’an is generally read in Arabic in order to keep it in its original, unchanged form. The example of the Prophet was recorded in the Hadith and Sunnah (way of the Prophet). Muhammad preached the words he had received and encouraged others to convert to the belief in one God (tawhid). Islam means ‘surrender’ and ‘peace’ and Muhammad taught both. He had to escape persecution in Mecca as a result of his beliefs and his followers formed the the Ummah (the worldwide Muslim community). Once in the new city of Madinah, Muhammad gathered an army of 10,000 Muslim converts. They marched into Mecca and destroyed idols at the Ka’aba, the monument built by Adam and then Ibrahim. Thus, Muhammad is importance for preaching monotheism (belief in one God).

During the early life of Muhammad, pagans (people who worship many Gods) had been ruling Mecca (in modern day Saudi Arabia). Thus, Muhammad is particularly important for preaching the oneness of God. One time, Muhammad entered Mecca and destroyed statues that he claimed had taken over God’s house. Muhammad started off a pacifist and preached in order to encourage people to convert to Islam. His reaction to early harassment of his followers was passive resistance. The Quranic revelations constantly urged him to "reply to foolish mockery with words of peace," to "pay no attention," and to "turn your face away". It was only after 12 years of pacifism, and an attempt on his life, that he decided to fight. Muhammad often would preach about forgiveness and the Qur’an states that, ‘whoever kills a soul, it is as if he has killed all of mankind’ (Surah 5:28). Thus, he argued that fighting had to be just and a last resort, once forgiveness and peace have failed.

Surah: A verse in the Qur’an (holy book of Muslims)
Ka’aba: the monument built by Adam in Mecca
BELIEFS ABOUT THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD

As a ruler, he also implemented many laws (known as Shari’ah Law) and was a role model to people. His examples were written down in the Hadith and things he said were recorded as Sunnah. He began a huge empire where many things were invented, from new medicines to new ways of thinking about philosophy. When he began to fight, Muhammad commanded an army and, whilst he fought in many wars, he tried to lay down strict rules on how to fight a war which included not attacking civilians or harming buildings or trees. It has been argued that he only fought in self-defence and never attacked anyone. The Prophet Muhammad taught that there are two types of jihad: meaning struggle. The greater jihad is the journey to better yourself as a person. The lesser jihad means holy war. Part of the rules of holy war are that innocents must not be killed and that fair methods must be used.

He also taught that people should look after women and children, as well as the environment. Muhammad had many wives as this was a way of providing for women. He also preached equality, teaching that everyone was as equal as ‘the teeth of a comb’ and all descendents of Adam. Muhammad got married at the age of 25 when Khadija proposed to him. He would stay married for the next 24 years and have four children, till her death. For the next 13 years he married a further 9 times, although his was for political reasons which was common at the time. He had no children with his later wives. At this time, women were unable to make money once widowed and, by marrying them, Muhammad was able to offer them safety.

Muhammad is often regarded as a feminist in the sense that he gave women rights under his rule. Women were given the right to divorce, speak in court and receive inheritance from their families. This had not been done before. Muhammad gave many rights to women for the first time. During the time of Muhammad, women were encouraged to go the Mosque in order to attend lectures and get an education. Women could receive religious degrees (izazahs). Women also played an important role in opening the oldest Islamic university in the world in Morocco.

Hadith: The example of the Prophet Muhammad
Sunnah: Sayings of the Prophet Muhammad
Greater Jihad: A spiritual struggle to become a better Muslim
Lesser Jihad: Holy or Just War
Descendants: From the same family line
Muslims believe that God has chosen many prophets to bring the message of Islam to the people. This belief in the prophets and their importance is known as Risalah. Muslims believe that Allah is the ultimate creator of the world. Since there is one God who created everything, there is a balance in creation and the life that exists is sacred (holy). In the creation story, it states that the angels questioned God’s decision to create Adam as they thought humans would only cause chaos. God told them to bow to Adam but Iblis (Satan) refused and vowed that he would always try to tempt humans into sinning. God gave humans free will so that they could choose to follow Him, and sent prophets to guide humanity. Adam was, then, the first prophet appointed by Allah. He was the first person created and was given guidance on how to take care of the world. Adam is described as a ‘khalifah’ (steward) of the world since he was told to care for creation. The creation story states that Adam was made from dust or clay of the ground and is the father of all humanity.

Adam is also important because it is said that God gave him lots of knowledge which could then be passed to his descendents. He was the first person who learnt to plant seeds and harvest crops, and was taught the rules of halal food. He also built the first place of worship called the Ka’aba. In order to prevent Adam from being lonely, God created Hawwa (Eve) and they lived in the Garden of Bliss, known as Eden in the Torah and Bible. They had many children including Cain and Abel. They were told not to approach the forbidden tree. Iblis deceived them into eating the fruit from the tree and Adam and Hawwa were banished from Paradise. As a result, humans would now be judged and die.

Like Adam, Ibrahim is also found in the Torah and in the Bible. Ibrahim is the Arabic name for Abraham. He is important to Jews because they believe that all their descendents come from his son Isaac, and important to Muslims who believe all their descendents can be traced back to Ibrahim through his first son Ismail. The Qur’an presents Ibrahim as a role model because of his complete obedience to God. Ibrahim originally worshipped a pagan religion where they worshipped idols such as the sun and moon. Ibrahim is important to Muslims because he answered a feeling within telling him to believe in one God instead. Ibrahim is known as an ‘hernif’: someone who has intrinsic knowledge of God. Ibrahim married Sara but she was unable to have children. She told Ibrahim to have a child with her handmaiden Hajar, as was common in those days. Ibrahim had a child with Hajar, called Ismail and, by a miracle, had a second child with Sara called Ishaaq (Isaac).

Sara became jealous of Hagar and told Ibrahim to take Hagar and her son to the desert. Allah gave them a well full of water to help them survive. This event is celebrated during the Hajj, the pilgrimage to Mecca, when people run between two hills and also drink the water from the Zamzam well. Mecca is sometimes referred to as the ‘city of Ibrahim.’ It is also said that Ibrahim rebuilt Adam’s black cube monument called the Ka’aba after it was destroyed in Noah’s flood. In another story, Ibrahim dreamt that God told him to sacrifice his son Ismail. Interestingly, Jews and Christians believe he was asked to sacrifice Isaac. With a heavy heart, Ibrahim agreed but as he was about to sacrifice his son, Allah replaced the sacrifice with a ram instead. Ibrahim had passed the test and shown complete obedience in God. Every year, Muslims sacrifice an animal in the festival of Eid-ul-Adha.
**ANGELS**

Most of what is known about Mika’il is from Islamic tradition rather than the Qur’an. It is said that he assisted Muhammad with his spiritual mission and still helps to guide people today. He is another high-ranking archangel who is known to Christians and Jews. Muslims believe that Mika’il is the Angel of Mercy. He is responsible for helping to reward good people for their good deeds. It is said that Mika’il was given this responsibility when he bowed to Adam. God asked all the angels to bow to the first man. Mika’il was the first to do this. As a result of his obedience, God gave him responsibility for sending rain, thunder and lightening to earth as well as for the plants. This is said to be symbolic to mean that he will provide spiritual help for the soul and material help to the body.

Some Islamic tradition says that Mika’il lives in heaven, has wings of a dark green colour and hairs of saffron. Each hair has a million faces and mouths that can communicate in all languages. This symbolises people asking for Allah’s mercy on humankind. He is also mentioned as being present at some of the battles fought for the city of Mecca, alongside Muhammad. These battles are seen as being necessary at a time when Muhammad and his followers were under attack. They helped to spread the religion of Islam to a large empire. Finally, Mika’il is said to be one of the angels, alongside Jibril, who helps **weighing a person’s good and bad deeds** on the Day of Judgement. This will decide if people go to Jannah (Heaven) or Jahannam (Hell). It is said that these two angels keep a record of all our actions. God bestowed free will upon his people and, as such, they are held accountable at the end of their earthly life.

Jibril (Gabriel) is the angel most familiar to Christians and Jews as well as to Muslims. He is an **archangel** (a special angel with higher status). Jibril relayed the message to Maryam (Mary) that she would give birth to **Isa (Jesus)**. Jesus was a very special prophet in Islam who taught peace and love. He also, importantly, taught that there was one God, a belief which Muslims call **tawhid**. God is said to be omnibenevolent (all-loving), just and omniscient (all-knowing).

Jibril is known as the ‘**Angel of Holiness**’ because he brings good news to people. In one of the Hadiths, it also says that he has **600 wings**. Each wing filled the horizon as far as the eye could see in all directions. Jibril was the first thing to be given life by Allah. Muslims believe that **Jibril spoke to Muhammad** in Cave Hira and, over 23 years, dictated the Qur’an directly from Allah. Many Muslims believe that he taught Muhammad the 5 Pillars of Islam which include prayer and fasting. Muhammad is important because he is believed to be the final prophet, who received the correct version of God’s law and committed it to text.

The original first revelation happened on the **Night of Power**. It is believed that Jibril told Muhammad to recite (read). Muhammad said that he could not read. The angel Jibril then squeezed him three times before he was suddenly able to say the words. This is important because it shows God’s **omnipotence** (all-powerful nature). He is also important because it is through Jibril that Muhammad was able to receive the message from God. Finally, Jibril is said to be one of the angels who helps **weighing a person’s good and bad deeds** on the Day of Judgement. This will decide if people go to Jannah (Heaven) or Jahannam (Hell).
The Qur’an says that life after death exists. Since it is the word of God this is said to show that there is a Heaven and a Hell. Belief in life after death is called akhirah. Belief in akhirah is very important for Muslims. They believe that they will be held accountable for their actions in life and that Allah will decide what happens in death. Islam teaches that Allah (God) has full control over all that happens. Nothing can happen unless permitted by Allah. However, Allah has also given humans free will; people are able to choose between right and wrong, and are responsible for their actions. This life is a preparation for the eternal life to come (Akhirah). Humans have one life and it is up to them how they choose to live it.

It is also believed that God sent prophets and angels to explain to humans how they should behave. The final revelation (God’s final word) was given to the Prophet Muhammad. This was written down in the Muslim holy book, the Qur’an. This gives Muslims teachings on how to get to Jannah, or Heaven. Many Muslims also believe in predestination or Al-Qadr. This is the belief that, because God is omniscient, He must already know what will happen in life. However, God does not decide what will happen. Imagine that a father offered his child a choice of ice cream or cake; he knows that his child will choose one, but the child is still free to make the choice. Muslims who do good deeds, such as giving to charity (zakah) or being obedient to God, through following the Qur’an, will travel across a narrow bridge to paradise (Jannah).

The Day of Judgement: Muslims believe that when they die they must be buried and not cremated so that the body stays intact. Muslims believe that they will remain in their graves until the Day of Judgement. Muslims believe that the angel of death will first take a person’s soul to barzakh, the stage between the moment they die and the moment of facing judgement. Muslims believe that the whole body will resurrect (come back from the grave).

On the Day of Judgement, an angel will blow a trumpet to announce that the world will be destroyed. It will turn into a new world (akhirah) and everyone who has ever lived will be resurrected and judged by God. Their book of life will be read by the angels Jibril and Mika’il. Muslims also believe that, at the end of the world, the Messiah (Jesus) will then come back to earth to fight against false prophets. Smoke will cover the whole earth. There will be blinding light and mountains will become dust. Allah will balance the good deeds a person has done in their life against the bad deeds. If the good deeds outweigh the bad, the person will go to paradise (Jannah), a place of joy and bliss. If the bad things outweigh the good, then the person will be punished in hell (Jahannam). When Allah is making a judgement, even a person’s intentions (niyyah) are taken into account.

**AKHIRAH:** Life after death  
**PREDESTINATION:** The belief that God knows everything, including what will happen in a person’s life  
**CREMATION:** When the body is burnt  
**RESURRECTION:** When the body rises from the grave  
**BARZAKH:** State of waiting after death  
**JUDGEMENT DAY:** When Allah judges the dead and decides their fate
**Heaven and Hell**: Heaven (Jannah) is described as being a garden of happiness, with ‘cups of pure drink’ and ‘any fruit they choose’ (Qur’an 56:15). Hell (Jahannam) is a place of fire and torment, for those who reject God and do evil. In the Qur’an, it says that people sent to Hell will be made to wear ‘garments of fire’ and that ‘scalding water will be poured over their heads.’ The decision about where a person will go is said to be made when two angels open the book which contains the record of a person’s deeds in life. If the person’s name is recorded on the right-hand side of the book, they will go to Paradise. If it is recorded on the left, they will be sent to Hell. While all people will try to reach Paradise over the Assirat Bridge, those who are meant to go to Hell will only fall off when trying to slip into Heaven.

Not all Muslims actually believe these descriptions are literally (word-for-word) true. Some Muslims argue these descriptions are metaphorical or just symbolic. They are intended to remind Muslims to behave well. Those who have suffered should also have hope that they will be rewarded. They would argue that it is impossible to really know what these places are like or even if they exist in a literal way. However, Muslims make efforts to not go to Hell by trying to follow the 5 Pillars and the teachings of the Qur’an and the Hadith. Muslims also disagree about who will go to Heaven or Hell. For example, some Muslims argue that only ‘People of the Book’ such as Jews and Christians will go, whilst others argue that an omnibenevolent God would not send good people to Hell.

The belief in Heaven and Hell influences Muslims in many different ways. Belief in life after death is one of the five roots of Shi’a Islam. It is also an important belief for all Muslims as it encourages human responsibility and accountability: the idea that people must be responsible for their actions as they will be judged later.

Belief in life after death urges people to avoid sin and do the right thing. For example, Muslims may argue they must give to charity because the Prophet Muhammad taught them to and that this act will be judged favourably by God. Belief in life after death is also about justice. Muslims believe that God is just (fair and merciful) and if they are good in life, they will be rewarded.

This links to the problem of evil and suffering: many people suffer in life but Muslims believe that they will receive rewards later, whereas people who are bad will go punished in the after life. Life can be seen as a test, including evil and suffering, as people who are good and do not cheat the test or go against God’s word will be rewarded.

**AL’JANNAH**: Heaven  
**JAHANNAM**: Hell
HOLY BOOKS

Muslims believe the Qur’an is the most important text, and also use the hadith and sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad. However, they also see the Torah, the Psalms and the Gospel as important texts. Muslims believe that the Qur’an is the unchanged, literal word of God, which was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad by Angel Jibril over a period of 22 years. This is known as the ‘revelation’ of the Qur’an and took place on the ‘Night of Power.’ Unlike holy books that came before it, which Muslims believe contain errors, the Qur’an is said to be the final, correct version of God’s word. Most Muslims, then, believe that it is infallible (cannot be wrong). Many Muslims argue that the Qur’an should always be read in Arabic to ensure that no errors are made through translation. As such, this influences Muslims to learn Arabic, if it is not the spoken language of the country, at madrassah, or Islamic school.

Muslims believe that Muhammad received the words through a miracle; he claimed that he could not read but when Jibril told him to ‘Recite!’ he was suddenly able to. The Qur’an contains 114 surahs (chapters) which decrease in length. Many of the verses are used in daily prayer and remind Muslims who practise prayer of their beliefs on a daily basis. It contains stories about many key prophets including Isa (Jesus) and Ibrahim (Abraham) who are also very important to Muslims. It is also the basis for Shari’ah Law, or Islamic Law, used in many countries today. It influences how Muslims celebrate birth and marriage, and how they should grieve the dead.

Another important source of authority is said to be the Scrolls of Ibrahim. However, these have been lost over time. Muslims believe that these were revelations received by Ibrahim. Ibrahim is believed to be an important prophet because he was so obedient to God, agreeing to sacrifice his son Ishmael when commanded to in a dream. He also preached monotheism at a time when many believed in pagan gods. His act of obedience is remembered at the festival Eid-ul-Adha when a ram is sacrificed.

The Psalms (Zabur) are a collection of prayers to Allah from David, a Jewish king. They contain lessons of guidance for the people and are song-like. One important idea in Psalms, which are also accepted by Jews and Christians, is that a Messiah will come at the end of the world. Many Muslims believe there are similar to the Psalms found in the Bible.

Muslims and Christians believe the Messiah is Jesus. The life of Jesus is also recorded in the Gospels. ‘Gospel’ means ‘Good News.’ The original Gospel is mentioned in the Qur’an and it is believed that this refers to a book divinely revealed to Jesus. It is thought that this Gospel has been lost but that some of its contents is found in the Bible. However, Muslims do not accept the Incarnation (the belief that God became human), the crucifixion (death of Jesus) or the idea of salvation, since they believe it is God who forgives sins. Muslims believe in the supremacy of God’s will: that nothing happens without God willing it so. Qadr, or predestination, means that everything is willed, or ordered, by God. We have free choice, but God knows all such possible choices. God is omnipotent, omniscient and omnibenevolent.

TORAH / TAWRAT: The books given to Moses (Musa)
PSALMS / ZABUR: The books given to David
GOSPEL / INJIL: Book given to Jesus (Isa)
Muhammad united tribes to form an army which he used to conquer large parts of the Arab world and form the Islamic Empire. When Muhammad died, it was not clear who should succeed him. Muslims split into two groups: Sunni and Shi’a When Muhammad died, the majority of Muslims thought that only the Qur’an and the Sunnah (Muhammad’s teachings and examples of what he did in his life) should be used to decide how to behave. These Muslims elected Abu Bakr as their first caliph (ruler) after the prophet died and called themselves Sunni Muslims after the ‘Sunnah’ or example of the Prophet. The caliphs did not make the laws but enforced them after being advised by scholars of the Qur’an and the Sunnah. ‘Sunni’ means followers of the Sunnah because this is where the laws and beliefs come from.

On the other hand, Shi’as believe that Muhammad named his cousin and son-in-law Ali as his successor. Shi’as believe that Ali is the first Imam (leader of the Imamate). Ali took control, according to Shi’a belief, because they believed the prophet had appointed him by divine instruction and that leadership should follow the family line. When Ali died, his son was believed to be the next Imam. Thus, Imams are related to one another. The Twelver branch of Shi’a Islam believe there have been 12 imams (religious leaders) in total. The last of the Imams is Muhammad al-Mahdi who they believe has been kept alive by God and who will return with Jesus at the end of the world. The Twelvers believe that the Imams not only rule justly but are able to maintain and interpret the Qur’an and Shariah Law without fault. Sunni and Shi’a Muslims believe that an imam today is a religious leader in a mosque but only Shi’a Muslims believe that there were 12 official divinely chosen Imams who, together, form the Imamate. The Twelvers believe that in each generation there has always been an Imam who is divinely appointed to make decisions about faith and law.

**CALIPH:** A person considered to be a political and religious follower, or successor, to the Prophet Muhammad and the leader of the Sunni community

**IMAMATE:** The divine appointment of the 12 Imams

**IMAM:** A person who leads the mosque OR in Shi’a Islam, one of the 12 Imams
Shi’a and Sunni Islam hold many elements in common such as belief in Tawhid (one-ness of God), belief in Risalah (prophethood) and belief in angels. However, they disagree about who the correct leaders are. They also have different articles or roots of faith. These are the official main beliefs. For example, all Muslims believe that angels are important but only Sunni Muslims list angels as one of the six articles of faith. Similarly, all Muslims believe charity is important but Shi’a Muslims also have an additional tax called khums.

Sunni Muslims list six main beliefs as their ARTICLES OF FAITH. Shi’a Muslims may also accept all of these as important even if they do not list them as the main beliefs of their denomination (group). These are belief in: tawhid, angels, holy books, prophets, God’s will and the Day of Judgement.

Thus, Sunnis believe that: (1) there is only one God; (2) angels communicate His message to humans; (3) the Qur’an is the most important writing and the highest authority in Islam; (4) Muhammad is the most important prophet; and (5) the Day of Judgement is when all humanity will be judged by God.

Sunni Muslims also have five main pillars of faith. These are PRACTICES rather than BELIEFS. They are acts that Sunni Muslims perform to show their faith. Muslims believe that they support the main beliefs of Islam, just as pillars are used to support a building. They can be seen as the key to living a perfect Muslim life and help to give Muslims an identity as a community (ummah) who share a faith; these acts allow Sunni Muslims to who obedience and dedication to God.

**SHAHADA**:
The declaration of belief in one God (Tawhid) and the Prophet Muhammad as His last messenger

**SALAH**:
Prayer five times a day in the direction of Mecca

**SAWMI**:
Fasting during the daylight hours during the month of Ramadan

**ZAKAH**:
2.5% of earnings to go to charity every year

**HAJJ**:
The pilgrimage to Mecca in Saudi Arabia, at least once
Shi’a and Sunni Islam hold many elements in common such as belief in Tawhid (one-ness of God), belief in Risalah (prophethood) and belief in angels. However, they disagree about who the correct leaders are. They also have different articles or roots of faith. For example, all Muslims believe that angels are important but only Sunni Muslims list angels as one of the six articles of faith. Similarly, all Muslims believe charity is important but Shi’a Muslims also have an additional tax called khums. Shi’a is the second largest branch of Islam and Twelver Shi’a is the largest Shi’a denomination. Usul ad-Din means ‘the foundations of faith’ often known as the ‘five roots.’ These are: (1) Tawhid: the oneness of God against whom nothing can be compared; (2) the justice of God, known as Adalat; (3) Prophethood, as Muslims believe that the prophets delivered the messages of the religion and the imam protects this message; (4) Imamate, or leadership, and belief in the 12 Imams that followed the Prophet Muhammad; and, (5) resurrection on the Day of Judgement.

Shi’a Muslims list five roots of their faith. These are: tawhid, prophethood, the justice of God, the Imamate and resurrection on the Day of Judgement. As one can see, these are very similar and the beliefs in Prophethood and Tawhid are shared.

Shi’a Muslims have 10 Obligatory Acts. The first four are the same as the Sunni Pillars of Islam. Jihad also applies to all Muslims, even though it is not listed as a pillar of faith for Sunni Muslims. It is the final five in the list that are not part of the Sunni tradition. The ten are: (1) prayer; (2) fasting; giving to charity; (4) pilgrimage to Mecca; (5) Jihad; (6) Khums, or the 20% additional tax; (7) directing others towards good or doing good; (8) avoiding or forbidding evil; (9) expressing love towards those who are good and who follow Allah; and (10) avoiding those who oppose Allah and the Imams.

**SALAH:** Prayer  
**SAWM:** Fasting during Ramadan  
**ZAKAH:** 2.5% to charity  
**HAJ:** Pilgrimage to Mecca  
**KHUMS:** 20% additional tax  
**NAHI ANIL MUNKAR:** Forbidding evil  
**AMR-BIL MAROOF:** Doing good  
**TABARRA:** Avoiding those who oppose Allah  
**JIHAD:** Struggle  
**TAWALLA:** Showing love for those who are good
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<td><strong>Prayer</strong></td>
<td>They pray five times a day in the direction of Mecca following wudu</td>
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<td><strong>Festivals</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Charity</strong></td>
<td>Muslims give 2.5% of their earnings, if they are able to charity</td>
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**SHAHADAH AND PRAYER**

The Five Pillars are central to Sunni Muslim life, just as pillars are central to a building. These are: (1) Shahadah - the declaration of Muslim belief; (2) Salah - daily prayer; (3) Zakah – charity; (4) Sawm – fasting during Ramadan; and (5) Hajj - the pilgrimage to Mecca. For Muslims who follow Twelver Shi’a Islam, there are ten duties called the Ten Obligatory Acts. These include all the Five Pillars except the Shahadah, as well as Khums (a 20% tax), Jihad (the struggle to do what is right), encouraging people to do good, discouraging evil, to be loving towards the friends of God and dissociating from the enemies of God. The basic belief of Islam is expressed in the Shahadah. It translates to ‘There is no God but Allah and the Prophet Muhammad is His messenger.’ Once this is said for the first time in front of witnesses, someone can become a Muslim. It is recited throughout life, from when a baby is born and in daily prayer. Shi’a Muslims add the phrase, ‘and Ali is the friend of God.’ In the Qur’an (Surah 112), it says, ‘He is God the One... And there is nothing comparable to Him.’

To observe the second pillar of Islam (salah), Sunni Muslims are required to pray at five set times during the day. They pray towards the Ka’ba in Mecca. Since all Muslims do this it shows equality. The times vary according to when the sun rises and sets. Muslims can find out times through a timetable and the direction using a compass or a special area in the mosque.

1. Fajr: just before sunrise
2. Zuhr: just after midday
3. Asr: afternoon
4. Maghrib: just after sunset
5. Isha: night

Muslims prepare for prayer in an act known as wudu, which means ritual washing. In the Qur’an it states that Muslims must ‘wash your faces and your hands up to the elbows’ as well as the feet. Mosques have special rooms for this. This allows Muslims to show spiritual cleanliness and encourages them to focus their mind on God. Daily prayers are made up of a number of rak’ah: a set sequence of actions and words (recitations). These vary according to which prayer is being performed. While standing, Muslims recite the first chapter from the Qur’an, they then bow down to show their submission to God. They then stand once more, giving another recitation, before bowing more deeply so that their forehead touches the floor. This is known as prostration. At the end, they kneel and turn their head to the right and to the left, which is sometimes said to be looking at angels.

**SALAH:** Daily prayer, done 5 times a day in the direction of Mecca

**WUDU:** Ritual washing in preparation for prayer

**SHAHADAH:** Declaration of belief in one God and the Prophet Muhammad as His messenger

**DU’A:** Personal prayer

**JUMMAH:** Friday prayer
Personal prayer (du'a) can be added at the end. The midday prayer every Friday is considered to be special and is called the Jummah prayer. All male Muslims are expected to attend the mosque, whilst women can choose. A sermon is delivered by the imam. The call to prayer lets people know when to do this. Muslims can also pray at home in any room or space that is cleaned. Many Muslims will use a prayer mat.

Prayer is commanded of Muslims in the Qur’an. It is written, ‘Your Lord says, “Call on Me and I will answer you.”’ Prayer, then, shows obedience to God and, given the time commitment, it shows real dedication. Prayer unites Muslims worldwide, in a community known as the ummah: all Muslims face Mecca, they all use the same recitations and positions (with some differences for Shi’a Muslims such as touching their forehead to a wooden block and different feet positions) and the actions remind them that they must all submit to God. Prayer helps to remind Muslims to think of God throughout the day and to ask for God’s forgiveness and mercy. Muhammad also prayed regularly and his example is seen as perfect.

In Shi’a Islam, there are a few differences in terms of prayer and the Shahadah. First, even though Shi’a Muslims also believe in Tawhid (the oneness of God), this does not form one of their 10 Obligatory Acts but is one of the roots of faith. In prayer, there are also some differences. Shi’a Muslims do not cross their hands whilst standing but have them by their side. They also touch their forehead to a wooden block or clay tablet from Karbala, a holy city for Shi’a Muslims as this is where Hussein, the grandson of Muhammad, was killed. They also position their feet differently to Sunni Muslims, folding them in the sitting position.
SAWM AND EID-UL-FITR

Ramadan is the 9th month of the Islamic calendar. Over the course of the month, Muslims will fast during the daylight hours. Many Muslims will also recite the whole of the Qur’an in daily sections beginning with the first chapter that says, ‘Read! In the name of your Lord!’ In the Qur’an, it says, ‘It was in the month of Ramadan that the Qur’an was revealed as guidance for mankind.’ This is because the Night of Power takes place during this month. This is the month when Muhammad received the Qur’an. Fasting is also commanded in the Qur’an where it says, ‘Fasting is prescribed for you as it was for those before you that you may learn self-constraint.’ Fasting, thus, demonstrates obedience to God’s word. It is also commanded in the Hadith.

The whole focus for the month is on God. Fasting can help people to focus much more on their spirituality. Since it is so difficult, it shows their commitment to God. It requires self-discipline and can teach Muslims more self-control. The fast is broken at sunset, often with a family meal that is begun and followed with prayers. It is traditional to eat dates as well. During the period of fasting, Muslims must also abstain from sex and smoking. In all aspects of their lives, they are to try and resist temptation. Not all Muslims have to fast. People can be excused for health reasons, including pregnant women and women who are breast-feeding. Children do not need to fast either or can do shorter periods. Women who are menstruating or others who are temporarily ill can do the fast later. These traditions and exceptions are all outlined in the Qur’an.

At the end of Ramadan, Muslims celebrate Eid-ul-Fitr, the festival of the breaking of the fast. It may be celebrated for 1, 2 or 3 days. Muslims gather in the mosques to say special prayers and people often celebrate by wearing their best clothes and decorating the home. Eid-ul-Fitr is a time for asking for forgiveness and giving to the poor. The month of Ramadan is designed to help Muslims feel more empathy for the poor. In Eid-ul-Fitr, money is given to charity to help those in need. This is another pillar of Islam, known as zakah.

The importance of the Eid festival is the same for Sunni and Shi’a Muslims but the Eid prayers differ slightly. For all Muslims, the festival is important as it reminds them that Allah should be the focus of all things and that time should not be wasted on material things in life. Muslims remember that they must think of Allah in all they do and look after the poor. Muslims believe that wealth comes from God and it must be used to benefit the community.

SAWM: Fasting which is one of the 5 Sunni Pillars and one of the 10 Obligatory Acts
THE NIGHT OF POWER: The night when Muhammad is said to have received the words of the Qur’an
EID-UL-FITR: The festival following the month of fasting
The third pillar of Islam is Zakah, sometimes spelled ‘zakat.’ This means giving alms (giving money to the poor). Only Muslims with savings greater than a certain figure, known as the nisab, are required to give this amount. For Muslims with enough savings, it is compulsory to give 2.5% of those savings every year to help the poor. The nisab is either worked out as the value of 87 grams of gold, which is around £2200, or 612 grams of silver, which is around £200. Muslims can choose which figure they use, although the gold nisab is more common.

As an example, this means that a Muslim with savings of £1000 would not be required to give Zakah if they were using the gold nisab, whereas a Muslim with savings of £4000 would pay £100. Zakah can be donated directly to a charity such as Islamic Relief or Muslim Aid. When the Grenfell disaster happened in London, Muslim Aid donated so much food and water that other donations had to be turned away and given to other food banks in London! In Islam, Muslims are taught that all wealth is a gift from Allah. Humans are simply the caretakers of God’s wealth and will be judged at the end of the world on how they used it. By giving Zakah, Muslims are acknowledging that everything they own comes from God and belongs to him, and that they should use their wealth to help those in need. Zakah literally means to purify or cleanse. Nearly 1/2 of the world's population — more than 3 billion people — live on less than £2 a day.

The money from Zakah goes to others in the ummah, the global community of Muslims. The Qur’an makes it clear that money should go to parents, close relatives, orphans, the needy, slaves to help them become free, for those in debt and travellers’ as ‘God is well aware of whatever good you do.’ Whilst Zakah is most often given at the end of Ramadan, Muslims are encouraged to voluntarily give up their money and time to charity at other times in the year. In giving Zakah, Muslims are fulfilling a duty imposed by God. The Qur’an makes it clear that giving Zakah is a sign of a true Muslim. Paying Zakah can also give a positive attitude towards money as people learn to share it and to avoid greed. It further strengthens the community by making rich members of the ummah support poorer members, and links well with other pillars such as salah as Muslims are taught to pray to remember those in need.

Shi’a Muslims follow ten obligatory acts rather than just the five pillars. As well as Zakah, they must give khums. This is 20% of their excess earnings and the term means a ‘fifth.’ Originally it referred to a requirement for Muslims to donate 20% of the money generated from the profits of war or military activity to the leader representing the state of Islam. Today, it refers to the excess income or earnings that a Shi’a Muslim makes, and is still set at 20%. Half of the money collected as Khums goes to Shi’a religious leaders, to be spent on behalf of God on things needed for religious teaching, while the rest is given to charity or the poor. One of the five roots of Shi’a Islam is the belief in the Imamate and the current religious leaders help to remind Shi’a Muslims of the 12 Imams who they believe followed the Prophet Muhammad.
HAJJ AND EID-UL-ADHA

A pilgrimage is a religious journey where believers visit a place of holy significance. Hajj is the pilgrimage to the holy city of Mecca, or Makkah, in Saudi Arabia. It is one of the five Sunni pillars and one of the 10 Obligatory Acts for Shi’a Muslims. It is a pilgrimage that should be made at least once during a Muslim’s lifetime so long as they are healthy and wealthy enough to make it. Some communities provide financial support for Muslims who cannot afford to go. Hajj can bring about a deep spiritual transformation, making them feel much closer to God. It can also teach them a number of skills, as the journey can be difficult, such as self-discipline. It also reminds Muslims of their holy prophets and can strengthen the bond between the ummah, the global community of Muslims. In the Qur’an it says, ‘Pilgrimage to the House is a duty owed to God by people who are able to undertake it.’

Before Hajj begins, pilgrims enter a sacred state called Ihram. They perform ritual washing and pray, before putting on white clothes that show equality and purity. Women may not wear white but must wear a single colour that covers all of their body apart from their face. These clothes show that they are all equal members of the ummah, the global community of Muslims. Hajj then begins at the Ka’aba. This is a black cube monument that is thought to have been built by Adam and, later, rebuilt by Ibrahim. Within it, there is a black ancient stone. Some believe it is a meteorite while others believe it comes from Jannah, or Paradise. Muslims circle the Ka’aba 7 times.

The crowd then walks along to a covered walkway linking two hills together, called Safa and Marwa. Muslims believe that around 4000 years ago, the Prophet Ibrahim was told by God to take his wife Hajar and their son Ishmail to Arabia. Ibrahim left them there with food and water but this ran out. Hajar prayed to God and ran between the two hills looking for water. Then, when Ishmail touched his foot to the ground, water came pouring out. Muslim pilgrims remember this story as they walk 7 times between the two hills. They then return to the Ka’aba to drink water from the Zamzam well. This water was used by Muhammad to provide water for the city of Mecca when he established it.

HAJJ: The pilgrimage to Mecca – this is one of the five pillars of Islam for Sunni Muslims and one of the 10 Obligatory Acts for Shi’a Muslims
Safa and Marwa: The two hills that Muslims walk between on Hajj
Zamzam Well: The well that Muslims drink from on Hajj
Ihram: The white clothes that Muslims wear on the pilgrimage
Ka’aba: The black cube monument that Muslims circle 7 times on Hajj
Muslims carry the bottles of water to Mount Arafat. This is a 13 mile walk in very high temperatures. When Muslims stand on the mountain, they do so from noon until sunset, meditating and asking for forgiveness. This is an extremely spiritual experience and the heat of the sun is said to be a reminder of what the Day of Judgement will be like. Mount Arafat is also said to be where the Prophet Muhammad preached his last sermon, where he reminded followers that they are all equal, descended from Adam and Eve. This is where Muslims can be forgiven of their sins. Muslims then camp with millions of other Muslims and collect 49 pebbles which they use the next day at Mina. Here, Muslims throw pebbles at three stones called Jamarat which represent the Devil. Men also shave their heads and women cut a lock of hair to show spiritual purity, as commanded in the Qur’an.

Eid-ul-Adha is then celebrated. It takes place on the 10th day of the last month of the lunar calendar. This day is within the period for Hajj so anyone on the trip will celebrate the festival as part of their pilgrimage. The festival dates back to the time of the Prophet Ibrahim who dreamt that he was told by Allah to sacrifice his own son. As they went on their journey, the Devil tried to tempt Ibrahim into ignoring Allah’s command. This is why Muslims throw stones at the pillars that represent the Devil as this shows they are fighting against temptation. Ibrahim threw stones at the Devil to make him leave. Muslims believe that Ibrahim did attempt to cut his son’s throat but when he looked down, he saw that God had replaced Ishmail with a ram instead. His son was safe and he had passed the test.

Sheep and goats are sacrificed to remember the story of Ibrahim. The meat from the animal is split three ways: one third for the family who have paid for the sacrifice, one third to relatives and friends, and the final third to the poor. Many families pay charity money in place of having a lamb sacrificed. The Hajj journey is completed by returning to Mecca.

The Sunnah are the practices of Muhammad which Muslims are encouraged to follow as he is seen as the perfect example. Muslims are encouraged to prepare themselves for Eid by completing the pre-sunrise prayer and dressing up in new clothes. Eid prayers have to be offered at the mosque with other Muslims and there will be a sermon focused around the example of Ibrahim, the poor and Muslims’ responsibilities to God.

EID-UL-ADHA: The festival commemorating Ibrahim
JIHAD

Jihad is one of the 10 Obligatory Acts of Shi’a Islam but is also important to Sunni Muslims. Prophet Muhammad said that the Greatest Jihad was the struggle to be a good Muslim and to worship God. This entails following the pillars of Islam: the Shahadah and Salah lay the foundations for faith by focusing the mind on God; Zakah requires Muslims to care for others, Sawm demonstrates discipline; and Hajj shows further dedication. Muslims must also devote their lives to God by avoiding such temptations as drugs, alcohol, greed and jealousy. They must declare their belief in one God and the Prophet Muhammad as His messenger. Muslims must try to control their own selfishness and resist temptation. Many other pillars and duties, such as fasting and giving to charity, may be difficult but in doing them Muslims show obedience to God. In the sunnah (sayings of the Prophet), it is written that he said, ‘the person who struggles so that Allah’s Word is supreme is the one serving Allah’s cause.’ This entails a spiritual journey. Many Muslims try to learn the whole Qur’an – when they are able to do this they are called hafiz, or hafiza. This is seen as a great achievement as it shows incredible dedication to the religion.

The lesser jihad refers to holy war fought according to strict rules. The lesser Jihad was taken on by Muhammad after many years of pacifism when he is said to have tried all peaceful methods with his enemies. As a last resort, then, war can be used in the name of God. In the Qur’an, it says, ‘Fight in the case of God those who fight you.’ This suggests that war may be allowed if it is in self-defence. Other rules include that war cannot be used for power or money. The lesser Jihad is also allowed so long as no innocent civilians are killed. In holy war, women and children must not be harmed and enemies must be shown mercy as much as is possible.

Some Muslims argue that the Qur’an suggests military struggle is very important, and may use this today to justify violence. There are many references in Islamic writings to wars, or ‘crusades.’ Some Muslims do not accept the term Greater Jihad and only argue for holy war. The word has been used frequently in relation to extremism where people have claimed the Qur’an allows killing. Many point out that the denominations within Islam, such as Sunni and Shi’a, have their roots in large-scale battles that took place. In this case, it was obviously seen as necessary to fight for one’s beliefs.

Most scholars argue that terrorism goes completely against teachings from the Qur’an. This is because war cannot be used to convert others, to hurt civilians or without being attacked first. Other Muslims believe that all forms of conflict are unacceptable. The Muslim Peace Fellowship argue that no modern war follows these guidelines. Given that modern warfare always kills civilians, they argue that pacifism is the only option today that God would allow. They also argue that the writings in the Qur’an about war must be understood in the context of when they were written. In the 7th century CE Islam was under threat. As such, these teachings no longer apply. The Qur’an says, ‘whoever has killed one soul it is as if he has killed all of mankind’ and ‘no soul can ever die except by Allah’s leave’ which suggests killing is wrong as life is sacred and only God is in charge of it.

GREATER JIHAD: The struggle to be a better Muslim e.g. Through following the pillars
LES瑟ER JIHAD: Holy war, fought according to strict rules
THE FESTIVAL OF ASHURA

Alongside the festivals of Eid-ul-Fitr and Eid-ul-Adha, Muslims also celebrate the festival of Ashura. Shi’ā Muslims believe that the festival of Ashura is the festival of sorrow. Ashura means ‘tenth’ because it occurs in the 10th day of the first month of the lunar calendar. Tradition believes that when Muhammad was in Medina, he saw the Jews fasting on the tenth of the month and asked them what they were doing. They explained that they were fasting to remember Moses, known as Musa in Islam, because he fasted on this day. They also explained that they were doing it to remember how Moses, with God’s help, saved the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. There are no Hadith to support this but many Sunni Muslims believe that this is why they also fast on this day. Ramadan was established a month later and, as a result, fasting was moved to this month of the year. Ashura remains the festival of sorrow for Sunni Muslims and they pray and ask for forgiveness.

The festival has a very different meaning for Shi’ā Muslims. In Shi’ā Islam, the festival of Ashura is a very significant event and is also the festival of sorry. They remember Hussein, the grandson of Muhammad, who was murdered in the battle of Karbala with 72 members of his family. They believe that he was killed because he refused to support a corrupt king. Hussein had taken his family to Mecca hoping that they would be safe but, en route, they were found and killed. Hussein was beheaded and everyone else was murdered.

For Shi’ā Muslims, then, it is a festival of sincere sadness. Many wear black as a sign of grief and mosques may be covered in black cloths as well. After the afternoon prayers, poems about the tragedy are read. In some countries, Shi’ā Muslims gather to whip themselves, especially in Karbala, although this practice is becoming less common. For Shi’ā Muslims, there is a great deal to learn from this festival: first, they believe that Hussein must never be forgotten, nor the actions of the imams; second, they believe that Muslims must stand up for justice in society and against corrupt rulers; and, third, they believe they must ask for forgiveness for their sins from God.

Sunni Muslims do not accept the whipping of the bodies because they argue the body is sacred and can never be harmed, not even if it is seen as being a worthwhile reason. Muslims believe in the sanctity of life because they believe that Allah made all living things and because in the Qur’an it says, ‘whoever has killed one soul it is as if he has murdered all of mankind.’ Many Sunni Muslims will still fast on the Day of Ashura but they will not whip themselves as Shi’ā Muslims may do.

ASHURA: The festival of sorrow
MARTYR: When someone dies for their religion