

# Forgiveness

All religions

Forgiveness is important to many religious believers — seeking God/Allah's forgiveness, and forgiving others.

## Forgiveness can Reunite People and Prevent Reoffending

- 1) Forgiveness means stopping being angry with someone who's done something wrong. It is very important for many religious believers. They believe God is merciful towards people who genuinely seek his mercy and that they should reflect God's forgiving nature in their own behaviour.
- 2) Many believe it's important to forgive criminals so they can be reconciled with the community. If they leave prison isolated from others, with no job and little prospects, reoffending might seem like the only option. Forgiveness allows both victims and perpetrators to move on. However, most religious people believe that criminals should still be punished for what they've done.
- 3) Forgiveness can be shown in many ways. Lesser offences no longer stay on people's records permanently, and there are schemes that give ex-offenders skills and a job when they're released.
- 4) Restorative justice is where an offender might meet people who've suffered because of the crime they committed. Actually meeting the people they've hurt can help offenders to realise the extent of the damage they've done, try to make up for their actions and discourage them from reoffending. It helps the victim to work towards forgiving the offender.

## Christianity Teaches that Forgiveness Comes from Love

- 1) Jesus taught that God is always ready to forgive and that Christians must accept that forgiveness, and forgive others in turn. The Lord's Prayer includes a verse about forgiveness (Matthew 6:12).
- 2) Jesus told people to seek reconciliation in any disagreements before offering a gift to God at the temple: "First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift" (Matthew 5:24 NIV). He also taught people to forgive "not seven times, but seventy-seven times" (Matthew 18:22 NIV).
- 3) Forgiveness is closely related to repentance. Christians believe that God's forgiveness can only come when they repent of their sins (i.e. say sorry, and turn their backs on them).

## Islam Teaches that Allah is Forgiving

- 1) Muslims can seek retribution (see p.60) for injuries, but they're encouraged to forgive instead. Whenever the Qur'an describes punishment, it talks about forgiveness too.
- 2) Muslims believe that they must be merciful so that Allah will do the same to them on Yawm ad-Din (the Day of Judgement).
- 3) They believe that wrongdoing should be forgiven if the offender is sorry and tries to make amends.
- 4) The Prophet Muhammad was forgiving, as told in the Hadith — Muslims believe in following his example.
- 5) But some crimes are seen as so awful that forgiveness isn't an option, e.g. shirk (see p.17).

"But if you pardon and overlook and forgive - then indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful." Qur'an 64:14

## Jews Should Follow God's Example and Be Forgiving

- 1) Jews believe that God is forgiving and merciful, so they must forgive other people too: "...for with the Lord is unfailing love and with him is full redemption" (Psalms 130:7 NIV).
- 2) For the festival of Yom Kippur, Jews ask for forgiveness, both from people they've hurt and from God (see p.34). Jews believe that you can only be forgiven by the one you've hurt, so God can only forgive a sin against God, not another person.
- 3) Jews should allow criminals to repent for what they've done and seek forgiveness:

"Let the wicked forsake their ways and the unrighteous their thoughts. Let them turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will freely pardon." Isaiah 55:7 NIV

## Forgive and forget (but not your revision)...

Explain two religious beliefs about forgiveness. Include a sacred text reference in your answer. [5]

