

As the saying goes, 'you can choose your GCSEs, but you can't choose your family'. Or something like that...

### Family is Important to Christians, Jews and Muslims

- 1) Ideally, a **stable family** can give a child a sense of **identity** and a feeling of **security**. They'll learn how to **behave**, how to give and receive **love**, and about **right** and **wrong**.
- 2) Many Christians, Jews and Muslims think it's best for a child to have a **father** and a **mother** present (ideally the child's **biological** parents), so that they grow up with one **role model** of each sex. Ideally, the couple would be **married**, as it's believed this provides more **stability**.
- 3) For **religious** people, family life can be a way of introducing their **children** to their **faith**.



#### Christianity and Catholic Christianity

- Family life is **important** for most Christians. It's seen as a way to build a **stable society**.
- **Many Christians** believe it's important to have **children** and **educate** them in the **faith** — see for example **Catechism of the Catholic Church 2226** and this quote.
 

"family is 'the first and vital cell of society.'" Pope John Paul II, *Familiaris Consortio* 42 (Catholic teachings on family)

"bring [your children] up in the training and instruction of the Lord." *Ephesians 6:4 NIV*
- This might include activities at **home** such as reading the child **Bible stories**, or teaching them about **prayer** by saying **grace** (giving thanks) before **meals**.
- Children become part of the faith at **baptism**, and this develops as they attend **church** and prepare for **confirmation** (see p.9). Many churches provide **Sunday schools**, which teach Christian **ideas** through **Bible stories**. Catholic children attend **catechism classes** to prepare them for their first confession and communion.
- Festivals such as **Christmas** and **Easter** have a strong emphasis on **celebration** within the **family**.
- Children are asked to **honour** their parents — to **look after** and **respect** them (**Exodus 20:12**).

#### Judaism

- Family life is also very **important** to **Jews**, as it's through the **family** that the Jewish **religion** and **customs** are passed on. Children are seen as a divine gift — **Psalm 127:3 NIV** says "Children are a heritage from the Lord". **Orthodox Jews** consider anyone whose **mother** is Jewish to be **Jewish** — **Progressive Jews** say the **father** can 'pass on' **Jewishness** as well.
- Children should **look after** their parents — **honouring** your parents is a mitzvah (**Exodus 20:12**).
- Many Jewish **rituals** happen in the **home**, such as **celebrating Shabbat** or **keeping kosher** (see p.32) so family life is important for **educating** children about the Jewish **faith**.
- Rituals like **brit milah** (male circumcision) and **simchat bat** (a girl's naming ceremony) **connect** the child to the faith. Their **bar/bat mitzvah** ceremony (p.33) requires them to **learn** about Judaism.
- **Talmud Bava Batra 21a** explains how **teachers** were introduced to **educate** children about the **Torah** from age 6 or 7. This ensured that **knowledge** about the Torah was **passed** from generation to generation. Now, **children** often attend classes at a **heder** (a religious school **run** by the **synagogue**) to learn **Hebrew**, and study the **Torah** and **Talmud**. This helps them be able to **participate** in **prayers** and **services**.

#### Islam

- Many Muslims think **family life** teaches people to be **kind**, **considerate** and **affectionate**. Strong family ties help **strengthen** the Muslim community — the **ummah**.
- The Qur'an asks people to **care for** their **parents** — "We have enjoined upon man, to his parents, good treatment" (**Qur'an 46:15**). Muslims place importance on the **extended family** too.
- Rituals such as **aqiqah** (a naming ritual) and the **bismillah** ceremony, which marks the **start** of the child's **religious education**, help connect the child to the faith.
- Following Muslim **food laws** by having **halal** food in the home helps **introduce** the child to **Islam**.
- Mosques often have **schools (madrasahs)** to teach children about **Islam**. They learn **Arabic** so they can read the **Qur'an** and say **prayers**. They're also taught from the **hadith** and **sunnah** (see p.19).

### It's never simple, is it...

Explain why family is important for many religious people.  
Include an example from a source of wisdom and authority.

[6]

