

Christian ethics: Attitudes to love and forgiveness.

What you should know:

- ✓ How Christians make decisions.
 - ✓ Types of love in the New Testament.
 - ✓ Love - of God, neighbours and enemies.
 - ✓ St. Paul's concepts of love.
 - ✓ Jesus' words and actions on forgiveness.
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Love:

Agape: is Christian love involving practical help.
Eros: sexual love or desire.
Philia: is love of friends and friendship.
Storge: is warm affection or liking for something.

The Great Commandment - Mark 12: 28 - 34.

A lawyer asked Jesus, "Which commandment is the most important?" Jesus replied, "First love God totally, and secondly, love your neighbour as you love yourself". Christians should put God first and secondly treat people as they wish to be treated.

Qualities of Love - 1 Corinthians 13.

St. Paul described true love as being patient and kind, not jealous and conceited. He also taught that love is eternal.¹

Love for enemies - Matthew 5:43 - 48.

Jesus told his followers to love their enemies and pray for them.

The Parable of the Good Samaritan - Luke 10:25 - 37.

Jesus told of a man who was mugged while on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho. A priest and Levite came by but did not help. A Samaritan stopped poured oil and wine on the wounds and bandaged them. He took the man to an

¹ Make sure that you read this in full or refer this to your notes as there is usually a question on this in the exams.

inn and paid for his care. 'Which acted like a neighbour?' asked Jesus. 'The one who was kind' replied the lawyer.

Forgiveness:

The key idea is that God forgives anyone who repents and asked for forgiveness providing that they forgive other people. The Lord's Prayer (Luke 11:1 - 4) says: 'Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who trespass against us'.

The Parable of the unforgiving servant - Matthew 18:21 - 35.

Peter asked, should he forgive his brother 7 times? Jesus replied 70 x 7 (meaning always). Jesus told the story of a King's servant who owed the King millions of pounds. The King decided to sell his family into slavery to ensure that he got some of his money back. The servant begged the King not to do this and asked for forgiveness as well as time to pay the money back. The King forgave the man and wiped off his debt. This servant then threw another servant into prison for not being able to pay only a few pounds that he was owed. The King was furious and had the unforgiving servant into prison.

King = God.
Servant = Sinner.

God forgave the sinner for all of his wrongdoing. But when the servant does not show that same forgiveness to others then God's justice is shown.

The woman caught in adultery - John 8:1 - 11.

A woman caught committing adultery was brought to Jesus. The Lawyers and the Pharisees said, 'Shall we stone her as the Law of Moses demands?' Jesus invited anyone who had never sinned throw the first stone. The religious leaders left one by one until only the woman and Jesus remained. Jesus said, 'I will not condemn you, go and do not sin again'.

Jesus believed that all people are in need of mercy and he encouraged the woman to make a new start.

The healing of the paralysed man - Matthew 9: 1 - 8.

Some friends carried a paralysed man on a bed to Jesus. Jesus saw their faith and said to them 'Your sins are forgiven'. Some Lawyers whispered, 'Only God can forgive sins'. Jesus challenged them by saying 'Is it easier to say "your sins

have been forgiven" or to say "Get up and walk?" To prove the Son of man's authority to forgive sins, I will heal this man'. The man was instantly healed.

The Parable of the Prodigal son - Luke 15: 11 - 32.

The younger of two sons asked his father for his inheritance then left home and spent his money recklessly. When a famine came, the only job that was available was feeding the pigs². He got so hungry that he wanted to eat the pig food. When he realized his stupidity he decided to go home. He planned to work for his father. Yet his father saw him on the road and ran towards him and hugged him. He ordered new robes and a ring to be brought to him. His father even killed the prized calf in his son's honour. The older brother was furious as a result of this.

The father represents God who is willing to forgive the repentant sinner (the son). The younger son is a sinner who repents³ and the older brother is the religious leaders who were unforgiving.

The Crucifixion - Luke 23: 26 - 43.

Jesus was crucified with two criminals at the Place of the Skull. He prayed, 'Forgive them Father! They do not know what they do'. Many people jeered Jesus, including one of the criminals beside him. The other criminal told him to stop it as they deserved to be there⁴. Jesus turned to this man and informed him that he would be in heaven with him by the end of the day. The criminal had asked for forgiveness and received it.

PRACTICE QUESTIONS:

1. What is the first commandment?
2. State *two* things that St. Paul said about love.
3. Name *two* types of love found in the New Testament.
4. What does the Parable of the Prodigal Son teach about forgiveness?
5. Explain what the Parable of the Good Samaritan teaches about love?

² Working with pigs was a terrible job for Jews because they believe that pigs are unclean animals.

³ Repent means to ask for forgiveness.

⁴ Jesus lived a life without sin. He took upon his shoulder the sin of the world when he died. He became the perfect sacrifice to pay for our forgiveness.