

RE, Philosophy and Ethics (RPE) –

Closure work for Year 10

I hope you are all OK. We are now moving onto previously-learnt knowledge of Philosophy and Ethics: Relationships. Today, we are going to look at the divorce and remarriage.

Tasks:

1. Read these information sheets on re-marriage and divorce (Christian view)
2. Summarise the knowledge in your books/ on paper
3. Write and answer all questions
 - What is meant by remarriage? (2 Marks)
 - What is meant by divorce? (2 Marks)
 - What might a Christian say in response to divorce and why?
 - What might a Christian say in about remarriage and why?
 - Stretch and Challenge: Explain religious attitudes to divorce and remarriage (8 Marks).

What does Christianity say about divorce and remarriage?

Often marriages can break down and this can sometimes mean that the couple decide to separate, this means to live apart. This separation can then lead to divorce if the couple choose to end the marriage legally.

Divorce is mentioned in the Bible, the main source of authority and guidance for Christians. Jesus's teaching on divorce is that it would lead to adultery, which is forbidden in the Ten Commandments, but he did allow for divorce in the case of a partner's infidelity.

I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, and marries another woman commits adultery.**Matthew 19:9**

The Christian teachings on divorce differ between denominations. Generally divorce is frowned upon, as marriage is considered a sacrament and the couple have made promises in front of God to stay together for life.

Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.**Mark 10:9**

This is interpreted in different ways by the various Christian churches:

- The Catholic Church does not recognise divorce. A marriage can only end when one partner dies or if there are grounds for an annulment. Catholics believe that an annulment is the only way a marriage can be ended. An annulment can only happen if the marriage has not been consummated or it can be proved that the marriage should never have taken place. A couple may be granted a civil divorce and be divorced in the eyes of the state, but their marriage will continue 'in the eyes of God'. This means that neither of the partners can remarry in a Catholic church.
- The Church of England and the Church in Wales do not advocate divorce but it is allowed if the marriage has truly broken down and cannot be repaired. Someone who is divorced can now remarry in an Anglican church.

Many Christians experiencing marital difficulties will try to work through them as they have promised before God to stay together for the rest of their lives. A couple may go to their church to ask for advice and support. However, sometimes a couple might feel that divorce is the only option.

Some Christian denominations will allow divorce as a last resort, if the couple have tried all other options, eg:

- marriage counselling
- talking to a vicar, priest or minister
- spending time apart

Remarriage

Remarriage is the term used for a situation where someone has already been married and divorced, but wishes to marry again. The Christian teachings on remarriage differ between the denominations.

- Catholics do not allow remarriage. This is because the person has broken promises they have made in front of God once, and so they believe that they should not be given the opportunity to do this again.
- Other denominations, such as the Church in Wales, do not have an absolutist view on this, but leave the vicar to consider the person's personal circumstances, and decide whether they should be allowed the

chance to remarry in a place of worship. Some vicars may choose not to remarry a person but agree to bless the marriage.

What does this mean in practice?

Most Catholics will try to resolve problems in their marriage to avoid divorce as it is forbidden by their Church. If the marriage has irretrievably broken down, they can get a civil divorce but they will be unable ever to remarry in the eyes of the Catholic Church. This is because they made an everlasting covenant in church during their original marriage ceremony.

In some instances the Catholic Church will grant an annulment to a couple whose marriage is not working out, if it can be shown that the marriage is not 'valid'. For a marriage to be valid three conditions must apply:

- the couple must marry freely and without reservation
- they must love and honour each other for life
- they must accept children lovingly from God

If it is shown that any of these conditions is not being met in the marriage, then one or both of the partners may ask for the marriage to be declared null and void. If a decree of nullity is granted, the couple is free to remarry and do so in church.

Most members of the Church of England and the Church in Wales will also try to work through any problems in their marriages to avoid divorce. However, if they cannot resolve these issues, they can get a divorce and they may remarry in the church.