

LITERACY LIFELINE - GCSE - Christian beliefs and teachings

TOP TIPS

Use **capital letters** and **full stops** in your sentences.

Use **paragraphs** to organise longer pieces of writing.

Take care with all **spelling** and **punctuation**.

ALWAYS write *God* with a capital letter!

Word/phrase	Meaning
ascension	The way that Jesus was taken up to Heaven after his resurrection
atonement	Restoring our relationship with God which has been damaged by sin
Creation	The belief that God made the world from nothing
crucifixion	The Roman method of execution involving nailing someone to a cross. The way that Jesus died
grace	Unconditional love that God shows to people even though they don't deserve it
Heaven	The state of being with God which Christians believe we will achieve after death if we have been faithful and good
Hell	The state of suffering or being without God after death which Christians believe we will achieve if we have been sinful without being sorry.
Incarnation	The belief that God took on human form in the person of Jesus
judgement	When God/Jesus will decide if we can go to Heaven after we die, based on our faith and actions while we were alive
just	Fair, wanting what is right
Moral evil	Things done through human choice which cause suffering
Natural evil	Things done by nature which cause suffering
omnibenevolent	The idea that God is all-loving and good
omnipotent	The idea that God is all-powerful
Original sin	The first sin committed when Adam disobeyed God and ate from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. The belief that we are all sinful because of this.
Purgatory	The Roman Catholic belief in the state between Heaven and Hell where our souls go to be purified before going to Heaven.
Resurrection	The belief that God will raise us to a new body after death OR the belief that Jesus rose from the dead after death
Salvation	The saving of souls from the consequences of sin
Sin	An action which goes against God's wishes and separates us from him.
Trinity	The belief in God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit

Christian beliefs and teachings

What is God like?


The nature of God

Omnipotent - all-powerful - he was able to create the world from nothing and can perform miracles.

Omnibenevolent - all-loving and good - The Bible says 'God is love' and Jesus taught us that loving our neighbour is the most important thing to do.

Just - fair and righteous - we are judged after we die and in the Bible it says 'For I, the Lord, love justice'.

The Trinity

Christians believe in ONE GOD but they think he has three different aspects. 
God the FATHER - he loves us and looks after us - Jesus called God 'Your Father in Heaven.'
God the SON - he was born as a human being, in the form of Jesus - 'In Christ all the fullness of God lives in bodily form.'
God the HOLY SPIRIT - The force of God that lives within us and inspires us to believe in him and follow him. - 'Now the Lord is the Spirit'.
Christians believe all parts of the Trinity were present when the world was created.

Christian beliefs about Creation



The Creation story is mainly found in the **first book of the Bible, Genesis**. It tells how God created the world and everything in it from nothing. The Holy Spirit was present because it says '*The Spirit of God moved across the waters*'. It took 6 days. The last thing he created was humans, who he made 'in his image'. On the seventh day, he rested.

In **John's Gospel**, he tells us about how Jesus was present at the time of Creation.

'In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God'. We know that 'the Word' is Jesus because he later says, 'And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us.'

Some Christians believe the story is completely true - the Bible is the Word of God, so it cannot be wrong.

Some Christians believe the basic idea of God creating things in order is true but there could be some errors, such as the time it took, because God inspired humans to write it and humans can make mistakes.

Some Christians believe the scientific explanations for **how** it all happened but think the important idea that God is behind it all is true - it helps us to understand the reason **why** the world exists.

Influence: The story makes Christians realise God's power and love and makes them think that human life is special, because we were made in God's image. They respect all living things because God made them.

The Problem of Evil and Suffering

We suffer because of **natural evil**, like earthquakes and floods and from **moral evil** like murder and bullying. But that doesn't make sense!

- if God created the world, he could have made it without natural disasters
- if God is all-powerful, he could stop suffering
- if God loves us, he would not want us to suffer
- if God is just, he would not let innocent people suffer.





What do you think?

Should there be suffering if God loves us?

Christian solutions

- ✓ Suffering is a test of faith - if we keep on believing we will pass and go to Heaven
- ✓ Suffering is a fair punishment for sin
- ✓ Coping with suffering makes us better people
- ✓ The suffering of others gives us a chance to follow Jesus' teaching and help those in need.

Life after death

Belief	Detail	Quote
<p>Judgement</p> 	<p>After we die, we will be judged by Jesus who will decide if we can go to Heaven. He will judge us on our faith and our actions.</p> <p>Roman Catholics believe our souls go to Purgatory after we die until final judgement. In Purgatory, we are purified of our sins so we can go to Heaven.</p>	<p>'For we must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ.'</p> <p>Jesus said, 'I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'</p> <p>The Parable of the Sheep and Goats tells us that we will be judged on how much we helped people in need.</p>
<p>Resurrection of the Body</p> 	<p>We will be given a new body by God on the Last Day. Some Christians believe this will be a physical body, others do not. It will be different from our body on Earth. This means some Christians think their earthly body is important because it will be needed for resurrection. Therefore they want to be buried, not cremated, when they die.</p>	<p>St Paul said "The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable...it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body' (perishable means it can die. Sown means buried)</p>
<p>Heaven and Hell</p> 	<p>Christians believe that when we are judged it is decided if we will go to Heaven or Hell. Heaven is a place of eternal happiness with God. Hell is a place of suffering without God. Some people believe these are physical places and Hell is a place of torture and pain. Others believe it is a spiritual place and the suffering of Hell is simply being without God. Some Christians believe that only good, believing Christians can go to Heaven. Others believe that all good people who believe in God can go there.</p>	<p>The Bible says in Heaven there will be 'no more death or mourning or crying or pain'.</p> <p>Jesus described Hell as a place of 'eternal fire'.</p> <p>Jesus said, 'I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through me.'</p> 

Does it make sense to believe in resurrection of the body?

Yes	No
<p>If God is all-powerful, he can make it happen</p> <p>It is taught in the Bible, so it must be true</p> <p>It happened to Jesus so it must be possible.</p>	<p>There is no proof that it happens</p> <p>We know our body decomposes after death - there would be nothing left to resurrect.</p> <p>Where would all the resurrected bodies go?</p>

Should Hell exist?

Yes	No
<p>It is fair because bad people deserve to be punished - why should they go to Heaven? God is just, and this is justice.</p> <p>It is fair because we were given plenty of warning in the Bible and by Jesus of what would happen if we did not follow God's teachings.</p>	<p>If God loves us, he should not want anyone to suffer like that forever, no matter what they have done.</p> <p>God is supposed to be forgiving. He should give everyone another chance.</p>

Should Heaven be just for Christians?

Yes	No
It can be difficult sticking to your beliefs and Christians deserve the reward of Heaven. Jesus said the only way to the Father was through him.	All good people deserve the reward of Heaven for living a good life. What about people who never get a chance to learn about Christianity? It's not fair on them.

Incarnation – the belief that God became human in the form of Jesus.

Why do Christians believe it?

- ✓ The Nativity Story in the Gospels tells them that Mary became pregnant by the Holy Spirit and her baby would be 'The Son of the Most High'.
- ✓ John's Gospel tells them that 'The Word became flesh and lived among us'.
- ✓ Jesus taught God's message and performed miracles, showing that he had God's powers.

Why is it important?

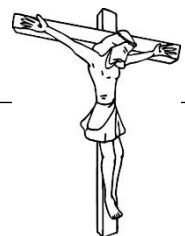
- It shows God's love for us, that he was prepared to live as a human
- It helps us to feel connected with God, because he was once like us
- It helps us to cope with suffering, knowing that God understands what it is like.



How could Jesus be both human and God at the same time without losing his Godly powers?

He never lost his powers, he just chose to set them to one side so he could truly live as a human being.

Crucifixion Jesus' death on the cross and what it means for Christians.



What happened? The events of the crucifixion

The story of the crucifixion is in all four of the Gospels, which are the books of the Bible which tell the story of the life and teachings of Jesus and it is mentioned by a Roman historian, Tacitus. Jesus was arrested after one of his disciples, Judas, betrayed him. The Roman Governor, Pontius Pilate, sentenced him to be crucified. This was a method of execution often used by the Romans. Jesus was taken to Golgotha, outside Jerusalem, and nailed to a cross, with a crown of thorns on his head to make a joke of his crime - he was executed for being called the 'King of the Jews'.

It took 6 hours for Jesus to die. The Bible tells us that during this time, he forgave the people who were executing him and called out, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' When he died, a Roman guard commented 'Surely this man was the Son of God'. One version of the story tells us that the sky went black and the Temple curtain was torn in two.

<i>How does the story of the crucifixion show this was an important event?</i>	The sky turning black shows the whole world reacted to what happened.
<i>Why did Jesus think God had forsaken him?</i>	He may have felt abandoned by God in his suffering - remember, he was fully human!
<i>Why is the Roman guard's comment important?</i>	It reminds us who Jesus is as part of the Trinity and shows the impact of the crucifixion on a non-believer.

Why did Jesus have to die?

Jewish leaders wanted him to die because they thought he was teaching people the wrong things about God and claiming to be God, which they thought was blasphemy.

The Romans wanted to execute him because his followers called him the 'King of the Jews' and they thought he might start a rebellion.

Christians believe he had to die to pay the price for all our sins and take the punishment for us, so we could go to Heaven.

Why is the crucifixion so important to Christians?

It gave us atonement - the chance to restore our relationship with God and still have a chance of going to Heaven, as Jesus took the punishment for all our sins - so Christians try to be worthy of this sacrifice by following Jesus' teachings and being truly sorry for their sins.

It gives us a second chance with God, because Jesus took the punishment so we can go to Heaven - so Christians can feel hopeful that they can go to Heaven after they die.

It makes them realise how much God loves them, that he was prepared to suffer so much for their sake - so Christians try to show the same love to others, even sometimes sacrificing their lives.

Maximilian Kolbe was a priest who sacrificed his own life to save another in a Nazi concentration camp.

The Resurrection Jesus is raised from the dead!

What happened? The events of the Resurrection

On the third day after his crucifixion, some of Jesus' women friends went to his tomb to care for his body. When they got there, the stone had been rolled away and the body was gone. One version of the story tells how an angel told the women to seek Jesus among the living and one of them, Mary, saw him.

The disciples were unbelieving at first, but Jesus showed himself to them too.



What happened next?

Over the next 40 days, Jesus met with the disciples a number of times and told them to spread his message.

Why is the Resurrection so important?

- It shows that God has power over death, so Christians can be confident they will live on after they die.
- It shows that Jesus really was the Son of God, since only he could do this, so it strengthens Christian beliefs in Jesus.

Did Jesus' resurrection really happen?

Yes	No
<p>God is all-powerful, so he could have made it happen.</p> <p>There are eye-witness accounts of it in the Bible.</p>	<p>It is impossible to come back from the dead.</p> <p>The disciples could have made it up.</p> <p>There are other explanations for the disappearance of Jesus' body, like it was stolen.</p>

Ascension Jesus is taken up into Heaven.

40 days after his resurrection, Jesus takes his disciples to Bethany. They see him rising up to Heaven and disappearing into a cloud. Angels tell the disciples that he will return again in the same way he left them.



How does this influence Christians?

It confirms Jesus' identity as part of God
Jesus is no longer on Earth, so they think they have to do his work, helping those in need.
They look forward to the day when Jesus will come again.

Is resurrection the most important belief for Christians?

Yes	No
<p>It shows God's power over evil and death. It gives Christians hope that they will live again after they die. It shows that Jesus was victorious and not defeated by his enemies.</p>	<p>Incarnation is more important because it helps us to feel closer to God because he understands what it is like to be human. The Crucifixion is more important because Jesus paid the price for our sins and allows us a second chance to go to Heaven.</p>

Sin and Salvation What is the problem with sin and how can we be saved from it?

A **sin** is an action that goes against God's will and separates us from him. For example, murder, theft, lying or adultery. The Bible says 'the wages of sin is death' and Christians believe that on Judgement Day, our sins will count against us if we have not said sorry for them and we may be sent to Hell.



Do you think it is possible to live without sinning?
Should we be punished for sin if it is human nature to do it?

Original sin is the first ever sin committed in the Bible, when Adam and Eve disobeyed God and ate from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. They were punished by being banished from the Garden of Eden and having to work hard and experience suffering.

Some Christians believe we have inherited this sin from Adam and Eve and it is as if we were part of it.

Others believe the story shows that it is human nature to be sinful.

Either way - we are all sinners!

How can we obtain salvation (save our souls from the consequences of sin)?

Some Christians believe in ...	because ...
<p>Salvation through good works - this means we can obtain salvation by doing good deeds, such as helping those in need.</p>	<p>Jesus said, 'Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.' Which shows that we have to do good deeds if we want to avoid Hell.</p>
<p>Salvation through God's grace - this means we have to depend on God's unlimited love for us. If we truly believe in him, he will save us.</p>	<p>Jesus said, 'I am the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through me.' Which shows that belief in Jesus is the only thing that will save us.</p>

How does Jesus play a part in our salvation?

Christians believe that our sins separate us from God.
Jesus took the punishment as an act of **atonement** - to pay the price and restore our relationship with God. We could not do this on our own and needed Jesus's death on the cross to make it possible. His sacrifice means we can be saved.

How does this influence Christians today?

It makes Christians more aware of God's love for them and they try to show this to others on his behalf by helping to make the world a better place and helping those in need.

It makes Christians more hopeful that they can go to Heaven, because they know that Jesus has healed their relationship with God.