

Is Family More Important than Friends?

You must be able to:

- Understand the nature of families in society
- Describe and explain the structure of different family groups including nuclear, single parent, same-sex parents, extended and blended families
- Explain the benefits and challenges of each family group.

Key Scripture and Religious Teaching

Exodus 20:12, 'Honour your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you.'

Ephesians 6:4, 'Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.'

Proverbs 6:20, 'My son, keep your father's commands and do not forsake your mother's teaching.'

The Role of Family in Society

- The family has come to mean many things around the world but is still central to society, not just people living under the same roof.
- Families should provide an education for the next generation that cannot be delivered in the classroom. They are responsible for creating the first experiences that any child has.
- Older members of a family group can lead a child into a religion and broaden their knowledge of religious beliefs.
- In the community, families can work together with other families to create a sense of unity, whether they be religious or not.
- If a society is made up of stable family groups, then the society is much more likely to be at peace with itself, e.g. Sodom and Gomorrah is a classic case from the Bible showing the opposite to be true.



The Role of Family in Christianity

- Husbands and wives have distinct responsibilities within the family unit, both for themselves and towards each other.
- Traditionally the husband would be the 'breadwinner' for the family, while the wife would stay at home to bring up the children and look after the home.
- Although seen much less in modern society, the husband was considered to be the head of the family and largely responsible for decisions made in the home.

- Ephesians 5:22–25 recounts examples of how husbands should love and care for their wives and how wives should submit to their husbands.
- The concept of **submission** is less common in today's society, arguably due to its abuse throughout history.
- However, in Galatians 3:28, Paul explains how men and women are equal, suggesting a greater sense of shared responsibility in the family.

How are Family Groups Different?

- Family can take on many different shapes and sizes.
- The **nuclear family** focuses on the immediate relationship of the father, mother and children.
- However, this group may be based around a heterosexual couple, a homosexual couple or a single parent of either gender.
- In religion, an extended family can include grandparents and aunts and uncles, sometimes living under the same roof.
- With divorce common in society, some family units are **blended**, with children from different parents living together with one parent, their step-parent and step-siblings.

How is a Religious Family Different to a Secular One?

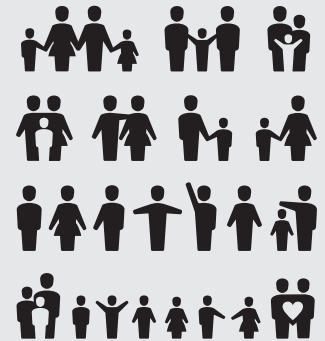
- In many respects, the religious family is very similar to a secular one.
- With many marriages failing and ending in divorce in secular society, it is more likely to find a married couple at the centre of a Christian family. This may not be the case in a secular family, with the couple either cohabiting or joined by a civil partnership.
- Single parent families are also not uncommon in Christianity and should not be seen as having a lower status than a two-parent family.
- A religious family may also spend more time together, as they are likely to worship and read scriptures together, e.g. Jews celebrate Shabbat together, with each member of the family having roles to play in the ceremony.
- Christian parents are also likely to take their children to church with them and bring them up following the rules of the Bible.

Quick Test

1. Why are families important?
2. How has family changed in recent years?
3. In what ways is a religious family different to a secular family?

Key Point

Family can take many different shapes and forms, but all are of equal value.



Key Point

Religious families are similar to secular ones in many ways but are responsible for raising their children in the faith.



Key Words

submission
nuclear family
blended family