

Corporal & Capital Punishment

Corporal punishment is a punishment where the convicted person will be forced to undergo some sort of physical pain, but will not be killed. In the past this has included flogging, whipping, branding, being stretched on a rack and facial or bodily mutilation. Corporal punishment also refers to methods of discipline that used to be used in schools such as the cane or the slipper.



Why is corporal punishment used?

Punishment in prison is a relatively new idea. For thousands of years it was thought that injuring a person would deter a criminal from re-offending. There is actually no evidence to support this. It was also believed that some forms of corporal punishment reduced the chances of re-offending. For example of you cut the hand off a pick-pocket, it would make it difficult to do it again. It also makes other people aware of his past, so they are less likely to trust him.

Modern Views.

***Matthew 18:21-22***

Although corporal punishment is still used in some countries in the world, it is largely condemned as a relic of a barbaric past. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights bans ‘*torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.’* Some people look at the rising crime rates and think that corporal punishment would be an effective deterrent, especially for very violent crimes. However, many people believe that other forms of punishment that focus more on reformation, are more effective in reducing crime. Whipping can enrage and degrade a prisoner, it demoralises other inmates and makes prisoner officers appear violent and brutal. Studies in the USA have shown that whipped prisoners are more likely to re-offend than those who have not been whipped.

***Peter asked Jesus, “Lord, how many times shall I forgive those who sins against me? Up to seven times?” Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.***

*Matthew 18:21-22*

Corporal punishment in schools.

 Until the 1986 Education Act, school pupils could be caned, hit across the backside with

 a slipper or whacked across the hand with a ruler – all were common forms of corporal

 punishment in schools. It was used as punishment in the worst cases of bad behaviour and

 thought to be an effective deterrent. However as many of those who were caned just

 returned for more, it didn’t teach the lesson it set out to. It is now considered cruel, old

 fashioned and degrading.



Questions.

1. Explain what is meant by ‘corporal punishment’. Give some examples.

2. Draw up a table giving arguments for and against corporal punishment.

3. Explain what the Buddhist view of corporal punishment is? (Think about the Five

 Precepts).

4. What do you think the Christian attitude to corporal punishment might be?

5. Explain what the saying, ‘violence breeds violence’ means.

6. Thinking about your answer to number 5, what do you think the implications for a school might be if the government allowed the reintroduction of corporal punishment in schools?

7. What is your view on corporal punishment? Remember to explain reasons for your

 answer.

Things to do.

Corporal punishment is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

 Some examples -







**Corporal Punishment**

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| For | Against |
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3. The Buddhist view of corporal punishment is that is it \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

This is because they follow the first precept which is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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4. The Christian view of corporal punishment is mixed. Some might use the teaching, ‘Do not withhold \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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to suggest corporal punishment is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Other Christians

would say corporal punishment is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ because Jesus taught

forgiveness; ‘\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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Capital Punishment – Christian Views

Christians argue both for and against the death penalty. Research done in the 1990s in the USA found that Protestants who interpret the Bible to be the literal word of God, were more likely to be in favour of the death penalty than members of other religious denominations.

**Genesis 9:6 Old Testament**

**Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed**

In favour of the death penalty - It's in the Bible

Although the tone of the whole of the New Testament is one of forgiveness, it seems to take the right of the state to execute offenders for granted. Jesus was executed alongside two thieves with no discussion of the morality of their execution.

The commandment that 'thou shalt not kill' by affirms the seriousness of the crime of murder. This argument is based on interpreting the commandment as meaning "thou shalt not murder".

There is an argument that the criminal, by choosing to commit a particular crime has also chosen to surrender his life if caught.

Against the death penalty

Only God should create and destroy life.

Many Christians believe that God commanded "Thou shalt not kill" (Exodus 21:13), and that this is a clear instruction with no exceptions.

The Bible speaks in favour of the death penalty for murder. But it also allows it for 35 other crimes including idolatry, magic and blasphemy, as well as murder. We no longer regard any of these other than murder as deserving the death penalty. In order to be consistent, humanity should remove the death penalty for murder.

Modern society has alternative punishments available which were not used in Biblical times, and these make the death penalty unnecessary.

Christianity is based on forgiveness and compassion. Capital punishment is incompatible with a teaching that emphasises forgiveness and compassion.

Capital punishment is inconsistent with the general Christian belief in the Sanctity of life. This is most often taught in issues such as abortion and euthanasia, but consistency requires Christians to apply it across the board.

Questions.

1. Use a Christian teaching to explain why some Christians are for capital punishment.
2. Explain two further reasons for why some Christians are in favour of capital punishment.
3. Use a Christian teaching to explain why some Christians are against capital punishment.
4. Explain two further reasons for why some Christians are against capital punishment.





Capital Punishment – Buddhist Views

The death penalty is clearly inconsistent with Buddhist teaching. Buddhists place great emphasis on non-violence and compassion for all life. The First Precept requires individuals to abstain from injuring or killing any living creature.



The Buddha did not explicitly speak about capital punishment, but his teachings show no sympathy for physical punishment, no matter how bad the crime.

**An action, even if it brings benefit to oneself, cannot be considered a good action if it causes physical and mental pain to another being.**

Buddhism believes in the cycle of birth and re-

birth (Samsara) and teaches that if capital punishment is carried out it will have bad effects on the karma of both offender and the punisher.

Buddhism has strong views on the nature of punishment. Inhumane treatment of an offender does not solve their problems - the best approach to an offender is reform and his rehabilitation into society should be of utmost importance. Punishing an offender with excessive cruelty will injure not just the offender's mind, but also the mind of the person doing the punishing it is impossible to administer severe punishment with composure and compassion.

Questions.

1. Use a Buddhist teaching to explain why most Buddhists are against capital punishment.
2. Explain two further reasons for why most Buddhists are against capital punishment.

Questions.

1. Suggest non-religious (secular) arguments for and against the death penalty. You could do this as a table if you wish.
2. What is your opinion on capital punishment? Make sure you explain your reasons.

Exam Question.

 ‘Religious believers should never support the death penalty’. Evaluate this statement.

In your answer you:

• should give reasoned arguments in support of this statement

• should give reasoned arguments to support a different point of view

• should refer to religious arguments

• may refer to non-religious arguments.

• should reach a justified conclusion. [12 marks] SPaG 5 Marks