

# THE PURPOSE AND NATURE OF FAMILIES

## Learning outcomes:

To **describe** types of families  
To **explain** the role of parents and children  
To **evaluate** the purpose of families

## Starter:

Who is in your family? Make a list of all the people within your family.

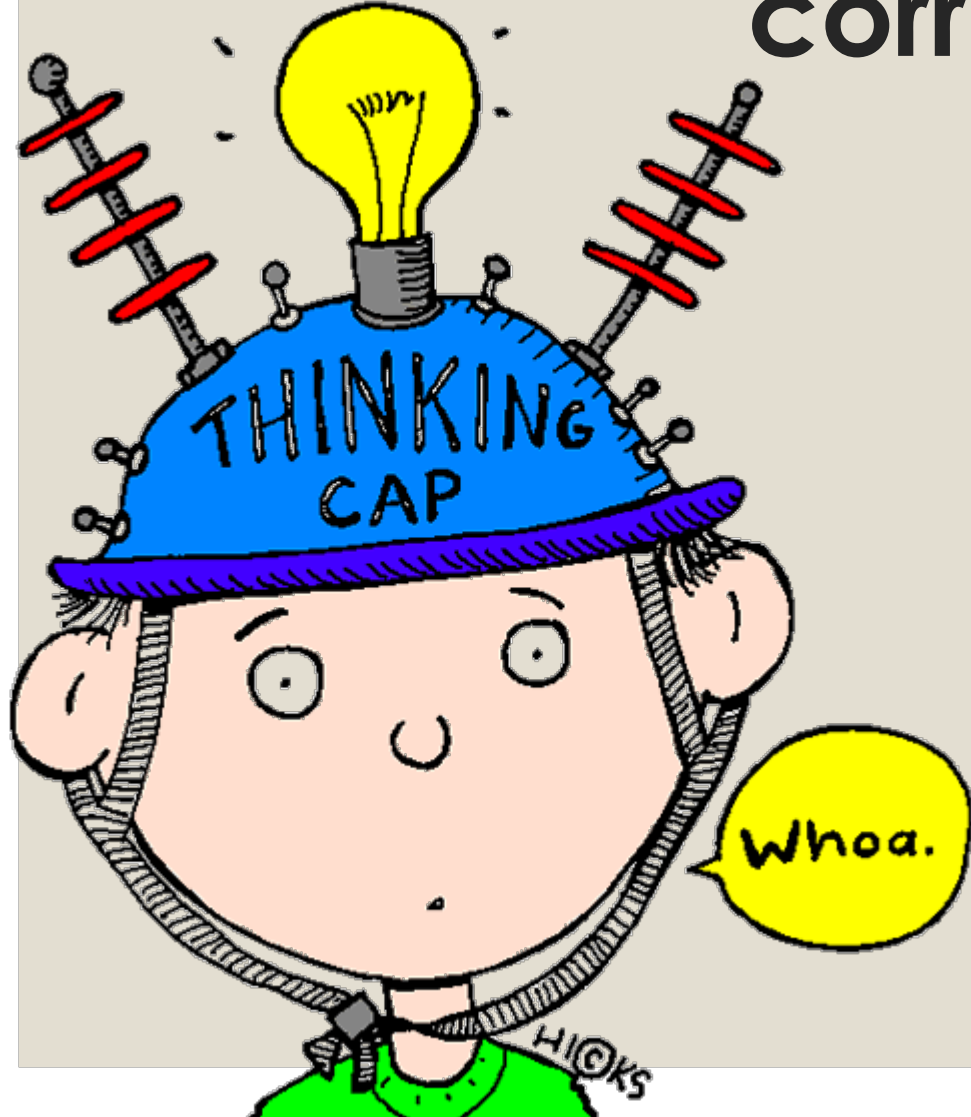
## Challenge!

Who would be the most important person from that list?  
Why?

# Key Terms

- **Family** – a group of people who are related by blood, marriage or adoption.
- **Nuclear family** – a couple and their children regarded as a basic social unit.
- **Step family** – a family that is formed on the remarriage of a divorced or widowed person and that includes a child or children.
- **Extended family** – a family that extends beyond just parents and their children by including grandparents and other relatives as well.
- **Polygamy** – the practice or custom of having more than one wife at the same time.
- **Bigamy** – the offence of marrying someone while already married to another person.
- **Same-sex parents** – people of the same sex who are raising children together.
- **Procreation** – bringing babies into the world; producing offspring.
- **Stability** – safety and security; a stable society is one in which people's rights are protected and they are able to live peaceful, productive lives without continuous rapid change.
- **Protection of children** – keeping children safe from harm.
- **Educating children in a faith** – bringing up children according to the religious beliefs of the parents.

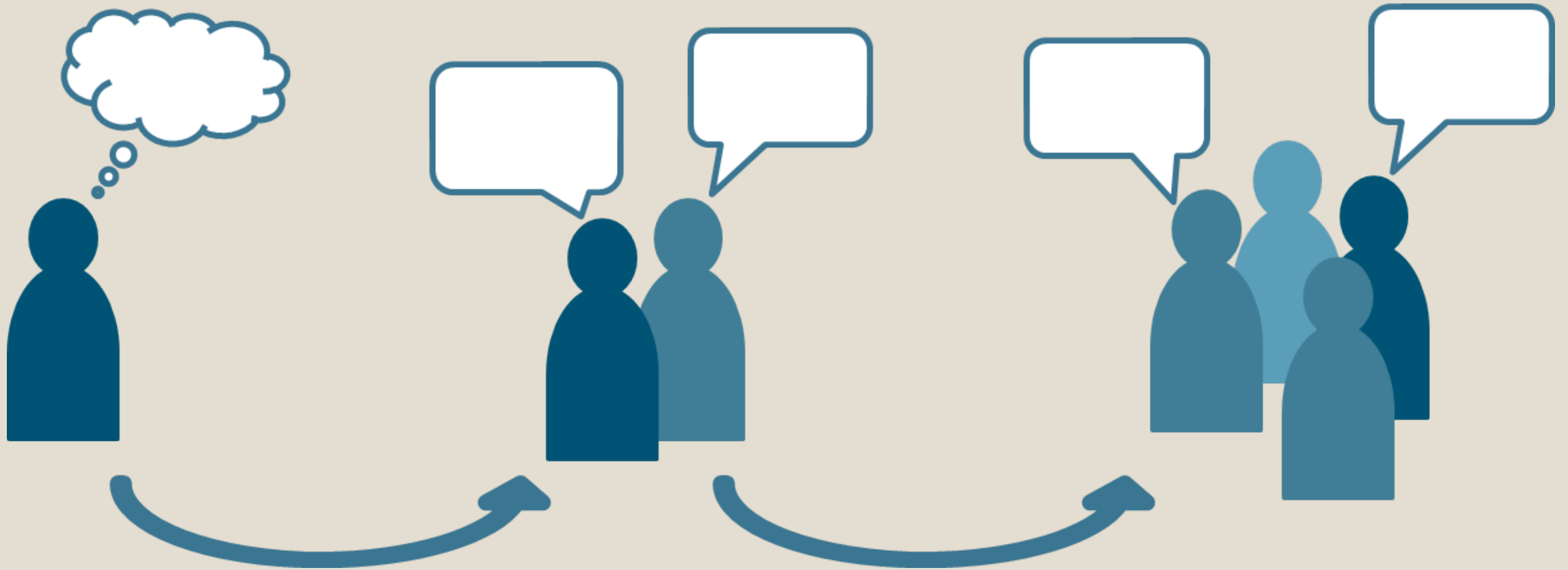
Can you match the key term with the correct definition?



<u>Key Term</u>	<u>Definition</u>
1. Family	A. Safety and security; a stable society is one in which people's rights are protected and they are able to live peaceful, productive lives without continuous rapid change.
2. Nuclear family	B. A group of people who are related by blood, marriage or adoption.
3. Step family	C. The practice or custom of having more than one wife at the same time.
4. Extended family	D. A couple and their children regarded as a basic social unit.
5. Polygamy	E. A family that is formed on the remarriage of a divorced or widowed person and that includes a child or children.
6. Bigamy	F. A family that extends beyond just parents and their children by including grandparents and other relatives as well.
7. Same-sex parents	G. Bringing up children according to the religious beliefs of the parents.
8. Procreation	H. Keeping children safe from harm.
9. Stability	I. The offence of marrying someone while already married to another person.
10. Protection of children	J. Bringing babies into the world; producing offspring.
11. Educating children in a faith	K. People of the same sex who are raising children together.

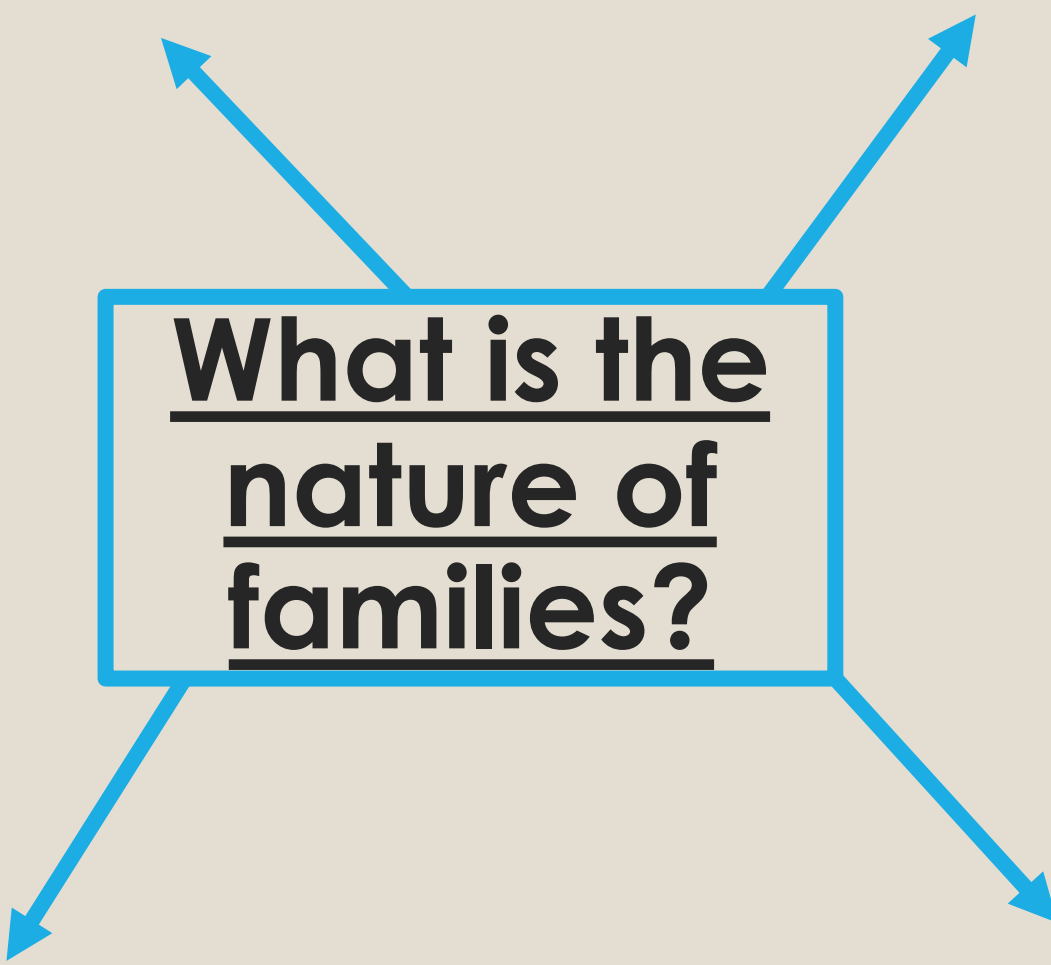


# What is the nature of families?



Watch the clip  
and take notes:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Wh9rnhnP9I>



**What is the  
nature of  
families?**

- Family life has changed over the years but the family is still considered the best environment for bringing up children and keeping society stable. The basic unit of mother, father and children (nuclear family) is still most common in the West, although in the UK approximately 25 per cent of children now live in single-parent families. There are more 'stepfamilies', where divorced people with children marry new partners with children of their own. Same sex couples may have children from previous relationships, legally adopt children, conceive through in vitro fertilisation (IVF), or use surrogates.
- In the past, families were larger, and often included grandparents and other relatives (an extended family) living together. For many non-Western cultures, the extended family unit is still very common.

**Add  
these  
points to  
your  
notes!**

# What do these Christian quotes reveal about the nature of families?

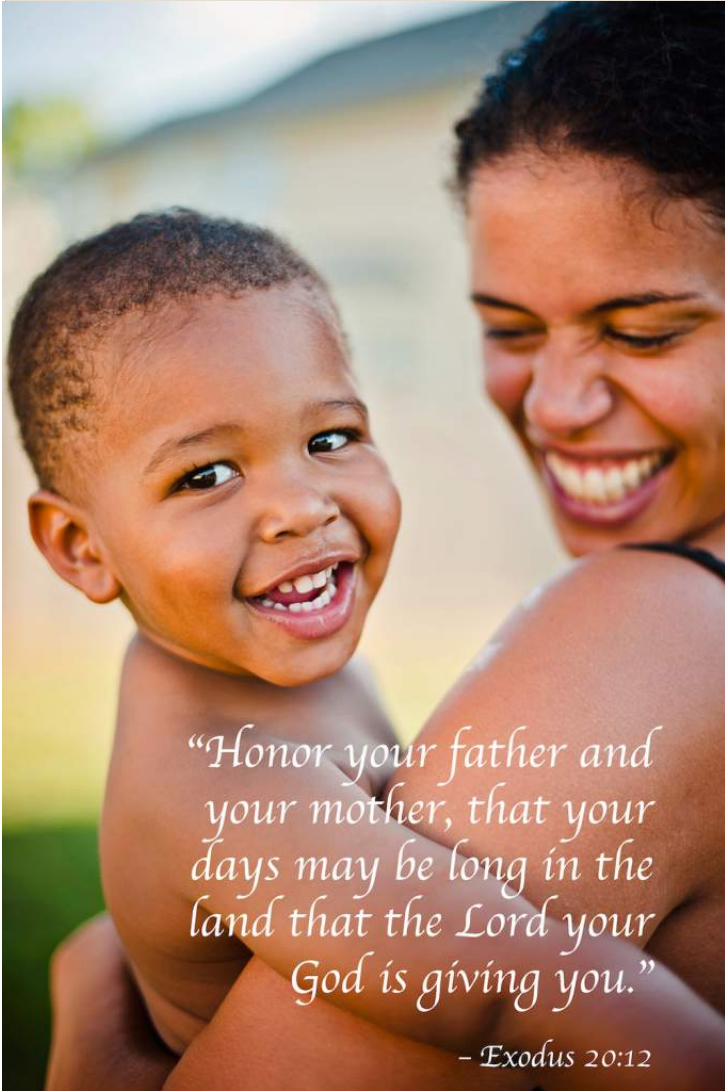
“Anyone who does not provide for their relatives, and especially for their own household, has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.”  
1 Timothy 5:8

“How good and pleasant it is when God’s people live together in unity!”  
Psalm 133:1

“Children’s children are a crown to the aged, and parents are the pride of their children.”  
Proverbs 17:6

“Here one learns endurance and the joy of work [...] love, generous – and even repeated – forgiveness, and above all divine worship in prayer and the offering of one’s life.”  
Catechism 1657

# Christian beliefs about the nature of families



*"Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you."*

*- Exodus 20:12*

Christians are commanded to love one another. They believe the way they relate to one another is important to God. Since, for Christians, love is at the heart of all relationships, they place a very high value on family life because it is in a family that a child learns to love. In Biblical times many people lived in extended families or 'households'. The entire family group looked after the children and provided for everyone's welfare, old and young alike. The extended family passed on the religion, customs and traditions of the society to the next generation. The commandment in Exodus 20:12 is an important Christian belief today.

1. **Explain two beliefs in Christianity** on the **nature** of **families**.
  2. **What** was **families** like in **Biblical** times? **Explain**.
- Challenge!** Which of the 10 Commandments are the most important? Why?

# Christian beliefs about the nature of families

- There are examples in the Bible of people who practised polygamy, and there was a law that protected inheritance rights of the firstborn child (Deuteronomy 21:15-16). However, Christians believe the ideal marriage of one man and one woman for life was created at the beginning.
- Paul makes it clear that each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband to avoid sexual immorality (1 Corinthians 7:2). Polygamous marriages cannot be performed in Britain as bigamy is illegal.
- Some traditional Christians disapprove of same-sex parents because they feel the ideal is for children to grow up with a male and female role model as parents. Other Christians say that it is more important for children to be in a secure and loving family regardless of the gender of their parents.

1. What do Christians believe is the ideal marriage? Explain fully your answer.
2. What was Paul's view on the nature of families?
3. Why do some Christians disapprove of same-sex parents? Explain fully your answer.

## **Challenge!**

Find the following quotes in the Bible:

- Deuteronomy 21:15-16
  - 1 Corinthians 7:2
- What do they mean?



# Did you find these quotes?

## **Deuteronomy 21:15-16**

### **The Right of the Firstborn**

<sup>15</sup> If a man has two wives, and he loves one but not the other, and both bear him sons but the firstborn is the son of the wife he does not love,<sup>16</sup> when he wills his property to his sons, he must not give the rights of the firstborn to the son of the wife he loves in preference to his actual firstborn, the son of the wife he does not love.

## **1 Corinthians 7:2**

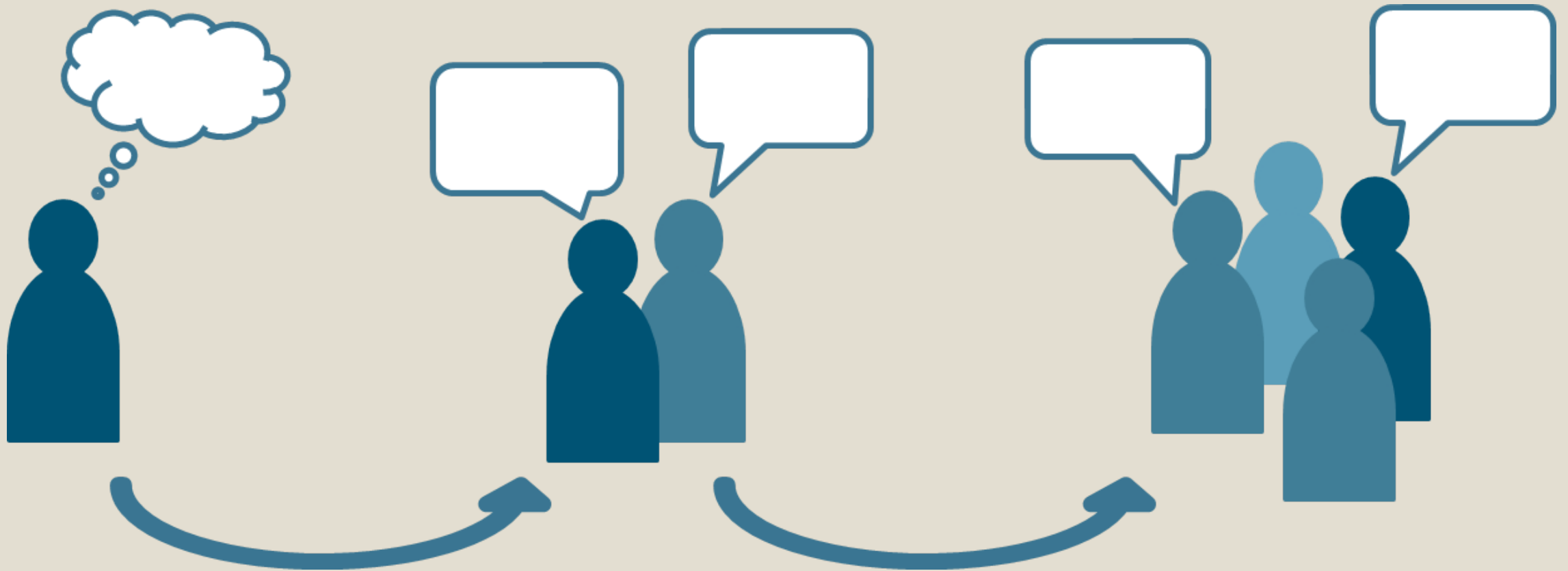
### **Principles of Marriage**

**1** Now for the matters you wrote about: It is good to abstain from sexual relations. **2** But because there is so much sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife, and each woman her own husband. **3** The husband should fulfil his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband....

### **Challenge!**

What do you think these quotes mean? Why do you think that?  
Do you agree or disagree with these views? Why?

# What do Buddhists believe about the nature of families?



“Social life begins with our parents; the intellect is cultivated through our teachers; family life is adjusted through experience; the world is appreciated through friends and relations; interdependence is realised through our employment and our final goal is achieved through spiritual guides.”

Medagama Vajiragnana Nayaka  
Thera (former Head of the London  
Buddhist Vihara)

**What does  
this tell us  
about  
Buddhists  
views on  
the nature  
of families?**

# What do Buddhists believe about the nature of families?

- Buddhism is not an especially family-centred religion. For Buddhists, there are no religious pressures or expectations to get married or to procreate. Both of these decisions should be a personal choice, although they may be influenced by the customs and traditions in the person's country.
- Buddhist family life usually reflects what is normal for the family's country. For example, in Buddhist countries such as Thailand and Sri Lanka, extended families are very common. Parents, children, grandparents and other relatives all live together, helping to raise the children and supporting one another in a large family unit. In the West, nuclear families are more common, consisting of a mother, father and their children living together.

1. Explain two views in Buddhism on the nature of families.
2. What is similar or different between Buddhists and Christians view on the nature of families? Why do you think this is the case?

## **Challenge!**

Why would nuclear families be more common?

# What do Buddhists believe about the nature of families?

- The Buddha did not forbid polygamy, but he did suggest that it would probably cause suffering to those involved. The implication is that while polygamy is tolerated in Buddhism, it is not the favoured family model. However, the Buddha taught that if a family is built on respect and love for each other then it does not matter who it consists of, as long as it respects the laws of the family's country.
- A similar approach can be taken to the issue of same-sex parents. Buddhists teachings suggest that the values, moral and love shown in a family are more important than the gender of the parents.

**“To support mother and father, to cherish partner and children, and to be engaged in peaceful occupation — this is the greatest blessing.”**

1. Why did the Buddha not forbid polygamy?
2. What moral precept does this link into? Why?
3. What do Buddhists believe about same-sex parents? Explain fully your answer.

## **Challenge!**

Write down the quote.  
What does it mean?  
How would this quote influence Buddhists views on family?

# The role of the parents



```
graph TD; A["The role of the parents"] --> B1[ ]; A --> B2[ ]; A --> B3[ ]; A --> B4[ ]; A --> B5[ ]; C["The role of the children"] --> D1[ ]; C --> D2[ ]; C --> D3[ ]; C --> D4[ ]; C --> D5[ ]; E["Mind map the role and responsibilities of:  
a) The parents  
b) The children (you)"]
```

Mind map the  
role and  
responsibilities  
of:  
a) The parents  
b) The children  
(you)

# The role of the children



## The role of the parents

Encourage positive morals and values

Educate their children i.e. reading, writing, careers

Love and care for their children.

Teach their children from right and wrong.

### Challenge!

Which of these roles are the most important for Christians and Buddhists?  
Which role for the parent/child do you disagree the most with?  
Why?

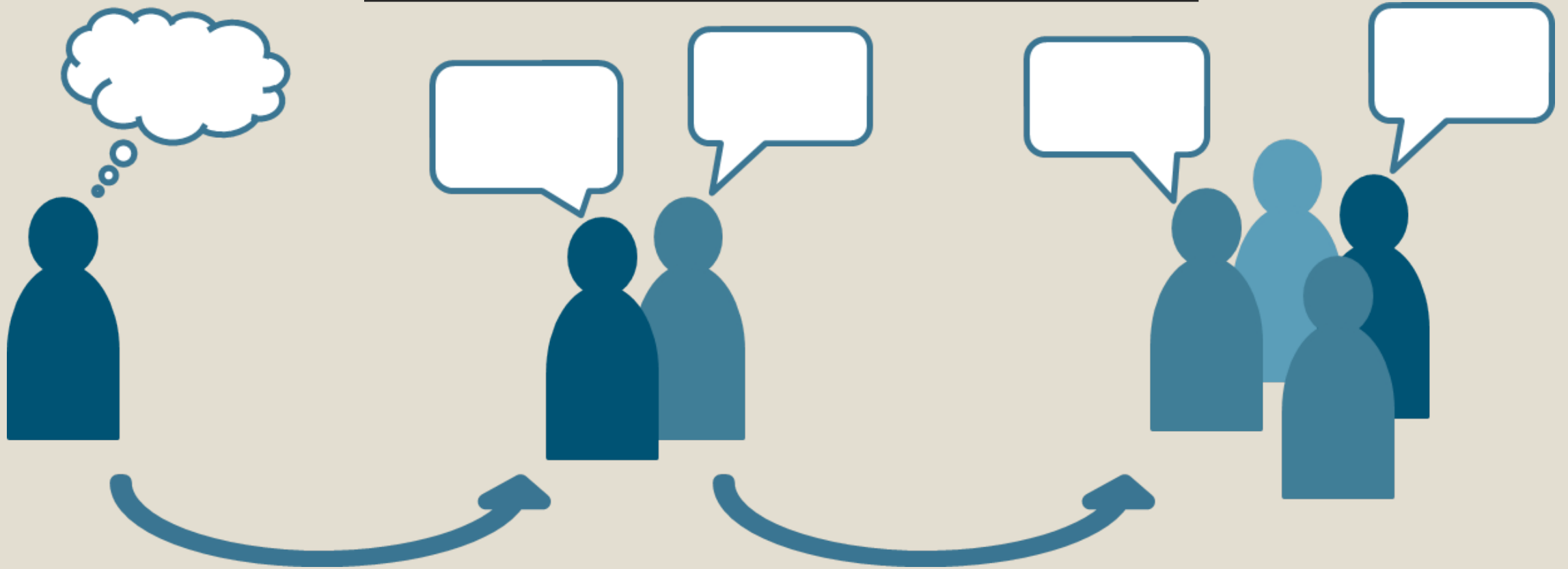
## The role of the children

Support and care for their parents in old age

Love and respect their parents

Preserve the traditions of the family

Now we've seen the role of parents  
and children...what is the purpose of  
families for Christians?



# What do these quotes tell us about the purpose of families in Christianity?

"The family remains the most important grouping human beings have ever developed.

Children thrive, grow and develop within the love and safeguarding of a family. Within the family we care for the young, the old and those with caring needs. Families should be able to offer each of their members commitment, fun, love, companionship and security."

The Church of England website

"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the Church and gave himself up for her."

Ephesians 5:25

"Listen to your father, who gave you life, and do not despise your mothers when she is old." Proverbs 23:22

"Children are a heritage from the LORD, offspring a reward for him. Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are children born in one's youth. Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them." Psalm 127:3-5

"Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged." Colossians 3:20-21

# What is the purpose of families for Christians?

## Procreation

- Mainly takes place within the family.
- There is more emphasis in Christianity (especially Catholicism) on procreation as a purpose of the family.

## Stability and the protection of children

- Families provide secure, stable environments for children to grow up in.
- Families offer mutual support and protection for their members.

## Educating Children in a faith

- Christian parents are expected to be good role models and teach their children Christian values.
- They should teach children about the faith and nurture their spiritual lives, which they may do through daily prayer.
- Some parents send their children to faith schools or groups run by their church for Religious Education.



# What do these images tell us about the purpose of Buddhist Families?





# The Purpose of Buddhist Families

- The Buddha gave no explicit rules about how family life should be conducted, but he did give advice on how families can live happily together, based on respect and love for one another. In Buddhist families, husbands and wives are expected to respect and honour each other, to cultivate love and trust towards each other, and to remain faithful to each other.





# The Purpose of Buddhist Families

- Buddhist parents should love and care for their children, and provide a stable and safe environment in which they can grow up. They should try to practise the four sublime states (loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity) when raising their children. They are responsible for teaching their children good morals and values, and for giving them a good education. They should be able to support their children and make sure they are provided for in the future.



# The Purpose of Buddhist Families

- Parents are also responsible for ensuring their children are taught Buddhist beliefs and practices. Families usually have a shrine dedicated to the Buddha in their home, and they teach children how to show respect and gratitude to the Buddha in front of the shrine. Parents should also involve their children in the local religious community, attending services and participating in festivals.
- Children are expected to be obedient and to respect their parents and other relatives. As they grow up, they are expected to preserve the traditions of the family. Later in life, they should support their parents when old age or illness becomes an issue.



## **‘Educating children in a faith is the most important purpose of a family.’**

Evaluate this statement. In your answer you should:

- Give detailed arguments in support of this statement
- Give detailed arguments in support of a different point of view
- Refer to religious scripture or teachings
- Reach a justified conclusion  
**(12 marks)**

**F**or – Some \_\_\_\_\_ agree with this statement because...Evidence for this is...This supports their view because...Therefore this is a strong/weak argument because...

**A**gainst – Other \_\_\_\_\_ disagree with this statement because...Evidence for this is...This supports their view because...Therefore this is a strong/weak argument because...

**R**eligious – Some **Protestants/Catholics/Mahayana/Theravada** .... Evidence for this is...This supports their view because...Therefore this is a strong/weak argument because...

**M**y opinion – Overall, I think the strongest argument is...because...Therefore...

# Peer Marking

## Question 5 (12 marks):

**Target: AO2 Analyse and evaluate aspects of religion and belief, including significance and influence.**

Levels	Criteria	Marks
4	A well-argued response, reasoned consideration of different points of view. Logical chains of reasoning leading to judgement(s) supported by knowledge and understanding of relevant evidence and information.	10-12
3	Reasoned consideration of different points of view. Logical chains of reasoning that draw on knowledge and understanding of relevant information.	7-9
2	Reasoned consideration of a point of view. A logical chain of reasoning drawing on knowledge and understanding of relevant evidence and information OR Recognition of different points of view, each supported by relevant reasons/evidence	4-6
1	Point of view with reason(s) stated in support.	1-3
0	Nothing worthy of credit.	0



**What would society be like if families did not exist?**



**How might newborn babies be cared for?**  
**Who would protect and raise children?**

One thing I have learnt  
today is...

One thing I am unsure of  
is...

One thing I would like to  
know is...