

# What Are Reasons For Crime?

## Learning outcomes:

To **describe** reasons for crime

To **explain** religious views on crime

To **evaluate** if crime is ever justified

## Starter:

Create a diamond nine.  
Which reason is the most acceptable for committing crime? Which reason is the least acceptable for committing crime? Which is the least acceptable reason for crime? Why?

# Key Words

- **Poverty:** being without money, food or other basic needs of life (being poor)
- **Mental Illness:** a medical condition that affects a person's feelings, emotions or moods, and perhaps their ability to relate to others.
- **Addiction:** physical or mental dependency on a substance or activity which is very difficult to overcome.
- **Greed:** wanting to possess wealth, goods or items of value which are not needed.



Most justified  
reason for crime

Why have you  
rank ordered  
your cards this  
way?

**Challenge!**  
Is there  
anything you  
think could be a  
cause for crime  
that isn't on the  
list? Why?

Reasonable  
justified  
reason for  
crime

Least justified  
reason for crime

Greed	Hatred	Opposition to an unjust law	Drugs
Depression	Poverty	TV Violence	Unemployment
Upbringing	Politics	Overpopulation	Other social and mental health disorders
Greed	Hatred	Victim of unfair rulings and the correction system (prison)	Drugs
Depression	Poverty	TV Violence	Child Abuse
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# Now, explain the reasoning behind your diamond nine!

## Example:

- **Poverty:** this is a cause of crime because people who live in poverty can not afford the necessities of life. Sometimes, welfare payments do not cover the cost of living. This can then lead to people stealing food and essentials that they cannot afford to buy.

### **Challenge!**

Add a religious teaching that condemns the crime committed!



1.

Watch the clip:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hZRyfRPwCt0&list=PLcD2TdZ4bXSnuhvrDMnAsBoBzOimFeVjn>

2.

What does Dr Christine Goodall say are the causes of crime?

3.

Do you agree or disagree with her? Why?

# What reasons does your exam give?

Upbringing

Poverty

Greed

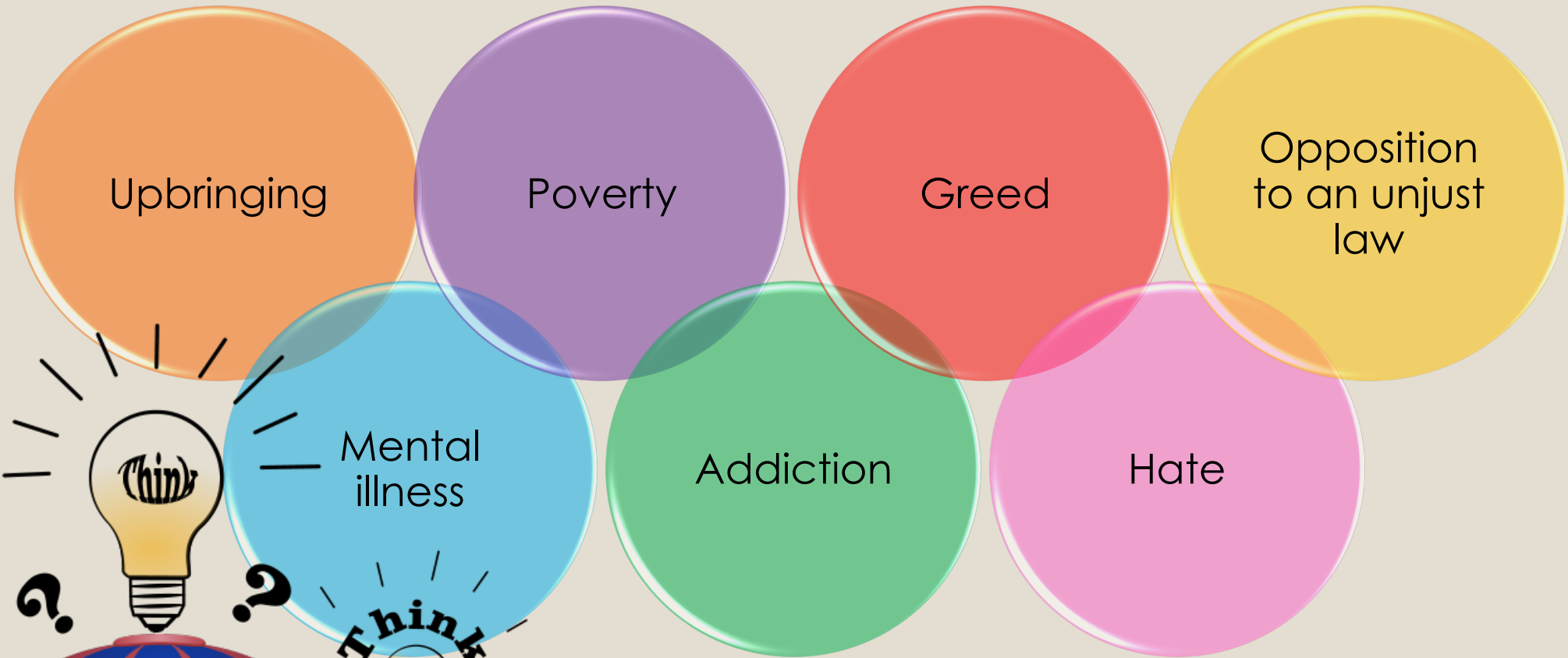
Opposition  
to an  
unjust law

Mental  
illness

Addiction

Hate

# What would a Buddhist or Christian say about these reasons?





## Task

- You need to **read** the reasons for crime from a **Buddhist** and **Christian** point of **view**.
- You need to **explain** in your own words the **reason**.
- You then need to **explain** a **Christian view** on that **reason**.
- You then need to **explain** a **Buddhist view** on that **reason**.

## Challenge!

Find quotes in the Bible that would support Christian views on reasons for crime!



## Buddhism

- There are many reasons why people commit crimes. These range from specific, immediate reasons – such as stealing someone's wallet to paying for a drug addiction – to more complex reasons to do with the way that society is structured, which affect, for example, people's upbringing and education.
- For Buddhists, while some actions that are considered crimes may arise from a skilful motive, such as defying a law that causes harm, crimes usually involve a lack of kindness or awareness of others. However, Buddhism recognises that various factors influence criminal activity, and that it is not simply a question of people being 'bad'. While Buddhism might condemn a crime, it would not condemn the criminal. Instead it would recognise that there were complex reasons and various outside influences that led the person to commit a crime. However, this does not mean that criminals are free of responsibility for their actions.
- There are many people living in poverty around the world who cannot afford basic necessities. This can sometimes lead people to steal food and other essentials that they do not have the money to buy. While poverty in itself is not a motive for crime, Buddhist scriptures make it clear that poverty is one of the underlying drivers of crime.
- The quotation "...from good not being bestowed on the destitute poverty grew rife; from poverty growing rife stealing increased, from the spread of stealing violence grew apace, from the growth of violence the destruction of life became common, from the frequency of murder both the span of life in those beings and their comeliness also wasted away..." (taken from The Buddha in the Digha Nikaya, p.67) indicates that if people do not have basic necessities, crime is likely to follow. While breaking the law for such reasons is understandable, it is still likely to cause harm to others. For Buddhists, stealing contradicts the second moral precept (to abstain from taking what is not freely given).
- If a child has a troubled upbringing – for example, because of violence, addiction or neglect within the family – this could affect them negatively in a number of different ways, and they might turn to crime as a result. Buddhism recognises that various conditions influence people's behaviour and value, and that in order to live an ethical life, people need supportive conditions that encourage sensitivity to others.
- Mental illness, such as anxiety and depression, does not often lead to crime. Even more serious mental health problems are responsible for only a fraction of violent crimes. Treatments such as therapy and medication can usually bring control, if not a cure, for mental illness. According to Buddhism, everyone sees reality in a distorted way, which leads people to inflict suffering on themselves and others.
- Addiction to drugs means that the human body becomes dependent on them and cannot cope without them. Addicts face the choice of not taking drugs – an action they know will make their life physically and mentally very hard – or spending money to acquire more drugs. They may commit crimes to be able to fuel their addiction. The drug that causes more crime than any other is alcohol. People who have drunk too much alcohol lose control of their thoughts and actions to such an extent that they may commit acts of violence or other crimes. The fifth moral precept teaches that Buddhists should abstain from taking drugs (including alcohol). People who are under the influence of drugs lose their awareness. This means they are less sensitive to others and so are more likely to cause them harm.
- If the material rewards to be gained by committing crime are much greater than any possible punishment, then people may be tempted to break the law. In places where personal possessions and wealth are seen as signs of status, this can help to fuel crime that is committed because of greed. Buddhism teaches that acting out of greed is unskillful and leads to suffering.
- Hatred is a negative feeling or reaction that can lead to prejudice and violence against whoever or whatever the offender hates. According to Buddhism, hatred is one of the three poisons and one of the main causes of suffering. Buddhists believe it is important not to feel hatred towards others, even when provoked.
- According to law makers, breaking the law is always wrong. However, throughout history people have broken laws that they believed to be unjust. Buddhists might want to disobey a law that expresses prejudice and hatred, such as a law that supports racial discrimination.

## Christianity

- While most people believe that all crime is wrong, sometimes how wrong it is may depend upon why it was committed. Sometimes it is due to selfishness, whereas at other times there may be circumstances that make it more understandable. As far as Christians are concerned, there is rarely any justification for committing crimes, especially as they believe that God has put law making authorities in place. They also believe that laws are important for keeping order in society so that people may live in peace. Christians may refer to Romans 13:1 to justify their beliefs.
- It is a fact that in the UK, some people live in poverty and cannot afford necessities of life. Welfare payments should cover living expenses but sometimes, for whatever reason, they do not. This can lead some people to steal food and essentials that they cannot afford to buy. Even though this may seem to be a good reason, it is still against the law and people will still be arrested for stealing. Whilst Christians condemn stealing they are keen to make sure that nobody is so poor that they can use poverty as an excuse for stealing. In June 2015 Pope Francis said "Focusing on poverty and sacrificing for the poor are the heart of the gospel. If Christians don't dig deep and generously open up their wallets, they do not have genuine faith."
- Growing up in a household where crime is a way of life may encourage a young person to follow the example of people they live with and drift into crime themselves. Even their parents may encourage them to commit crimes. Once they have been drawn into a life of crime, it is difficult for them to stop, even though they know what they are doing is wrong.
- Some people suffer from mental illness that causes them to commit crimes. Kleptomania is a mental condition that makes some people steal. Anger management problems may lead to assault or murder. In cases involving serious crimes and serious mental illnesses, the offender may be viewed as unfit to stand trial. They are likely to be sentenced to be kept in a secure unit where they receive the treatment they need, even though they have not had an actual trial. Their legal representatives will work with the court authorities to ensure justice is done.
- The nature of addiction to drugs means that the human body cannot cope without them. Addicts may resort to stealing in order to purchase the drugs their body needs. The drug that causes more crime than any other is alcohol. People who have drunk too much alcohol lose control of their thoughts and actions to such an extent that they may commit acts of violence and get into fights. If they drive while under the influence of alcohol, they are more likely to cause an accident than if sober. Most denominations of Christianity do not forbid drinking alcohol, but for Catholics, drunkenness is a sin, and no denomination encourages excessive drinking.
- In the UK personal possessions and wealth are seen as signs of status. Greed can lead to crime, especially theft or fraud.
- In the Ten Commandments, Christians are taught not to covet, which means they should not be jealous of what somebody else has, and envy is one of the seven deadly sins.
- Hatred is a negative feeling or reaction. It can lead to violence or aggression towards whoever or whatever the offender hates.
- According to lawmakers, any break of the law is wrong. However, there are occasions where people have deliberately broken laws they consider to be unjust. In the USA in 1955 Rosa Parks was arrested for breaking segregation laws by refusing to give up her seat in the bus to a white person. This act of defiance became an important symbol of the Civil Rights Movement that eventually changed unjust laws about the treatment of African Americans in the USA. Many people believe that any law that is based on prejudice or that breaches basic human rights is wrong and should be changed. If breaking the law brings about change, it may be seen as acceptable.
- Some people think it is right to break laws that try to prevent public protest in order to try to change an unjust law. But in most cases protests do not intend to cause injury or death.

<u>Reason</u>	<u>Explanation</u>	<u>Christian Views</u> (Include religious teachings)	<u>Buddhist Views</u> (Include religious teachings)
Poverty			
Upbringing			
Mental Illness			
Addiction			
Greed			
Hate			
Opposition to an unjust law			

# Debate the reasons!

What can be done to reduce the impact of each reason for crime?

Which are the worst reasons in terms of doing the most damage? Or in terms of most selfish? Why?

- Poverty
- Upbringing
- Addiction
- Greed
- Hate
- Opposition to an unjust law
- Mental illness



# Exam Practise!

**Explain** from **two** religious traditions the **impact** of **poverty**. Refer to **religious teachings** in your **answer. (5 marks)**

Some Catholic Christians believe that...because...Evidence to support this is from Pope Francis who said...This shows their view on the impact of poverty because...

Some Buddhists believe that...because...Therefore...

## Challenge!

**Have ago at the 12 mark question below:**

**'There are no justifiable reason for committing crime.'** 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 teachings
- Reach a justified conclusion

Can we  
ever  
prevent  
crime?  
Why?

