AQA Religious Studies A - Theme E: Religion, Crime and Punishment

1. Key Words			
Community Service	Working in the community to pay back for a criminal act	Hate Crime	A crime motivated by hatred e.g. racism, homophobia
Corporal Punishment	Using physical pain as a punishment	Poverty	Not having enough money to be able to live a comfortable life
Crime	An action which is against the law and incurs a punishment	Prison	A place where criminals are sent to withdraw their freedom as punishment
Death Penalty	A form of punishment where the offender is killed for their crime	Punishment	Something negative done to criminals by the state
Deterrence	An aim of punishment – preventing future criminals by harsh treatment of offenders	Reformation	An aim of punishment – to try and reform criminals
Forgiveness	To show mercy and pardon someone for what they've done wrong	Retribution	An aim of punishment – seeking a form of revenge on criminals

Key Ideas			
2. Christian Attitudes to Crime	**Good and Evil Intentions** The Bible warns Christians against having **evil** thoughts which lead to evil actions. Avoiding sin and temptation steers Christians away from crime. Christians would be more willing to treat an offender who had good intentions with more **mercy** than one who acted out of evil intentions.	**Attitudes to Lawbreakers** Christians do not believe that people are evil but that people can be **tempted** to do wrong and break the law. Christians are taught to "love the sinner, hate the sin" which means they should **forgive** and show mercy to people who have done wrong but admitted their mistakes and sought **atonement**.	
2. Reasons for Crime	People are tempted to commit crime for a wide range of reasons including **poverty** (not having enough money or food), **upbringing** (where people are not taught right from wrong), **addiction** (some people commit crimes to feed an addiction), **greed** (committing crimes out of a desire for things they cannot afford), **hatred** or out of **opposition to unjust law** (breaking the law to oppose hateful or unjust laws)		
3. Three Aims of Punishment	**Deterrence** This aim of punishment seeks to **use punishment as a message** to others considering committing crime. By giving one criminal a harsh punishment others may be put off committing a similar crime.	**Reformation** This aim of punishment seeks to help criminals **change their behaviour for the better**. It may involve therapy, education or training. Many Christians support this as a form of 'love your neighbour' **mercy**.	**Retribution** This aim of punishment is society getting its own back on the offender. The Old Testament says **'an eye for an eye'** so some Christians would argue that this form of punishment is just according to the Bible.
4. Forgiveness	**Forgiveness** is at the heart of Jesus' teaching. It means to show **mercy** and pardon someone for what they have done wrong but showing someone forgiveness does not mean they should be justly punished for their crimes. When Jesus was crucified, he forgave those who sentenced him to death and crucified him saying: **'Father forgive them, for they know not what they do'**. Forgiveness leads Christians to support reformation as an aim of punishment as it allows the criminal to be forgiven and to ask for forgiveness. They also use forgiveness as an argument against the death penalty.		
5. Christian Attitudes to Punishment	**Prisons** Many Christians believe prisoners should be **treated well** when in prison as even though they have done wrong they do not believe in evil people as much as evil actions. Some Christians campaign for better prison conditions out of mercy.	**Corporal Punishment** Most Christians do not support using physical pain as a form of punishment as it is **harmful** and **negative**. It is currently illegal in the UK and many Christians would rather seek to reform a criminal than punish them in this way.	**Community Service** Many Christians argue in favour of community service where criminals work to **repay** their community as a punishment. It allows criminals to make up for what they have done and does not harm the offender in the process.
6. Death Penalty	The **death penalty** means the state killing criminals who have committed the worst crimes. It has not been used in the UK since 1969 but is still a common punishment elsewhere in the world. ☑ Some Christians argue that the death penalty is a just punishment for murder as the Bible says both 'you shall not kill' and **'an eye for an eye'**. ☑ They may also argue that it **deters** criminals from committing the worst crimes and keeps people safe. ☒ Other Christians argue that the death penalty goes against **sanctity of life**. Life is sacred and holy and only God can give and take life. ☒ They might also argue that the death penalty goes against the aim of **reformation** as a dead criminal cannot be reformed, forgiven or shown mercy to.		