

Key Stage 3

Reform: How Does Religion Change?

LESSONS 5-6: CHRISTIANITY AND SLAVERY

This KS3 unit is about change – how it happens and what the fallout is. An aim, as well as to do justice to Protestant and Nonconformist Christian stances, is to understand that religion is not fossilised in time, but is alive and is constantly moving, driven by generations of struggle, hope and determination. Nor is religion isolated from geopolitical and social developments, but they are inextricably linked.

These two final lessons explore how Protestant groups in Europe and the early white American communities eventually achieved the abolition of slavery. However, as students will learn, while some Protestant groups practically invented modern mass protest, others continued to justify the use of slavery with reference to the Bible. These last two lessons allow students to reflect on the complexity of change.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

LESSON 5: SLAVERY – HOW DID ATTITUDES CHANGE?

By the end of this lesson students will:

- **know** that a trans-Atlantic slave trade existed for centuries, and slavery was the norm
- **understand** arguments for and against slavery from these times
- **reflect on** how far views from the past are different from today, and how far they are similar

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

1: MODERN ATTITUDES TO SLAVERY

LESSON CONTENT

- a. Allow students to explore case studies relating to modern slavery.
 Print and cut up small pieces of information, then place them in envelopes in middle of table.
 Give groups time to read and discuss.
 Ask groups to define ‘slavery’ based on the case studies.
- b. Ask for students’ initial ‘gut’ reactions. Ask for arguments against slavery, and any arguments they can offer in support of slavery as a form of employment.
 Draw a thermometer on the board, with ‘totally fine’ at the top and ‘totally unacceptable’ at the bottom. Ask students to explain their views with regards to slavery.
- c. Ask the class if they think the Bible is pro- or anti-slavery. Teach that the Bible doesn’t speak out against slavery. Ask for suggestions as to why this might be the case.
- d. Ask students to suggest what they think might have happened to change global opinion from accepting slavery to seeing it as an unacceptable moral evil? Teach that we will learn about Protestant anti-slavery movements, which changed the world, but also how other Protestant groups used the Bible to justify slavery ...

FURTHER INFORMATION

- a. For example this order of nuns who care for trafficked women: www.rahabuk.com
 Amnesty resource with four modern slavery case studies on pp. 11-14: www.amnesty.org.uk/files/activities_-_slavery_today_english.pdf
 You might feel uncomfortable discussing trafficking or sexual slavery, but an estimated 79% of modern slavery involves sexual exploitation.
 (United Nations (2009), *Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2009*. Available at www.unodc.org/documents/human-trafficking/Global_Report_on_TIP.pdf)
- c. Slavery was the global norm for millennia. It was seen as a fact of life, like poverty. The Bible does not object to the existence of slavery, but states that slaves should be treated well.
- d. Both pro- and anti-slavery movements within Protestantism used the Bible to support their arguments.

2: EARLY ABOLITIONISM

LESSON CONTENT

a. Hand out or display ‘Slavery Facts and Figures’, p. 8. Ask students to choose one line from the quotes and one image, and use to express their feelings towards the trade in humans.

b. Tell the dramatic story of Benjamin Lay’s opposition to slavery, using notes p. 9. If you are able, demonstrate Lay’s striking of a Bible filled with fake blood.

Ask the class to predict what happened next.

Teach that rather than feel galvanised into action, his Quaker group laughed and dismissed him as an oddity. Are students surprised?

c. Read the arguments surrounding slavery on p. 10. Ask students to identify arguments FOR slavery and arguments AGAINST slavery, shading them with two different colour pencils.

d. Ask groups to collate all arguments against and in support of slavery by cutting out arguments, moving them into two columns and sticking them down.

Ask students to share any ways these arguments are surprising. Ask students how far it seems ‘the past is a different country’ and how far people in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries thought in ways they can relate to?

e. Ask students to draw out the arguments AGAINST slavery they think are most powerful, and highlight or otherwise note them.

FURTHER INFORMATION

a. Images are suggested to display or print and hand out along with the quotes. Together these paint a rich picture of the trans-Atlantic slave trade.

b. Lay was a Quaker, a group who broke away from Anglicanism in seventeenth-century England. They are more formally known as the Religious Society of Friends.

c. These are arguments from the seventeenth century onwards all made by Protestants, whether priests or businesspeople, who were familiar with the widespread use of slavery.

3: PHYSICAL OR SPIRITUAL FREEDOM?

LESSON CONTENT

- a. Search Google Images for 'Jacobus Elisa Johannes Capitein', and display a picture of him. Capitein was one of the first African slaves to be freed, educated at university and become a Christian minister.

Ask the class to predict what they think his views on slavery would be.

- b. Read the biography of Capitein on p. 11 in groups. Ask students to identify Capitein's arguments regarding slavery, and write a one-line summary of his position. Listen to summaries around the room.

Are students surprised about Capitein's position on slavery? Ask students to identify Capitein's main priority with regards to the treatment of slaves.

- c. Search Google Images for 'Elizabeth Key', and display a picture of her. Teach that Key was born into slavery in Virginia. She was baptised and in 1656 she successfully sued for her freedom based on her status as a Christian. Ask students to discuss whether this case partially explains Capitein's later arguments.

- d. Return to the argument surrounding slavery. Students have already collated arguments for and against slavery and stuck into two columns. Label the column of arguments FOR slavery as 'Slave-owners'. Label the column of arguments AGAINST slavery as 'Missionaries'.

- e. Ask students to write THREE words to sum up slave-owners' biggest priorities, and THREE words to sum up missionaries' biggest priorities with regards to slaves and slavery.

FURTHER INFORMATION

- a. Capitein's Dutch master gave him a Dutch name. In the early eighteenth century, Britain and the Netherlands were the world's major slavers.

- b. Capitein did not argue that slavery should be abolished. He prioritised slaves' access to Christian salvation over physical freedom. He would rather they stayed slaves if it meant they could be baptised.

- c. In fact, after Key's case, slave-owners stopped baptising their slaves in case they claimed freedom.

- d. Over the century in which these arguments raged, these groups of people gradually began to coalesce around these arguments.

- e. Slave-owners wished to keep their valuable resources and missionaries wished to bring Christianity to slaves.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

LESSON 6: THE BIBLE AND SLAVERY

By the end of this lesson students will

- **know** how the Bible was used to support and reject slavery
- **understand** political and religious arguments employed to bring about an end to slavery
- **reflect on** how far change is inevitable, or contingent

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

1: SLAVE-OWNERS AND MISSIONARIES

LESSON CONTENT

a. In order to recap slave-owners' and missionaries' main priorities with regards to slaves, display these phrases and ask groups to identify if they would support a slave-owners' or a missionary's stance:

- Slavery is immoral.
- Slaves are a valuable resource.
- Slavery is making Britain rich.
- Slaves are equal in Christ to slave-owners.

b. Ask the class what religion these groups belonged to.

Display four images to briefly recap Protestant priorities: of a pope, a Bible in English, a coin and someone in prayer.

Ask groups to write these phrases on four separate sticky notes: 'direct word of God', 'individual salvation', 'without mediation' and 'salvation not for sale'.

Ask students to stick the notes onto the corresponding image suggesting Protestant priorities. Use this to recap main Protestant beliefs.

c. Ask the class to suggest what they think the Bible might say about slavery. Gather reasons from students who predict the Bible will be against slavery and those who think it will permit slavery.

d. Ask students to remind the class of Capitein's argument with regards to slavery from the last lesson.

FURTHER INFORMATION

b. Both groups were Protestant.

Pope = without mediation

(Protestants rejected priestly mediation between people and God), **Bible**

= direct word of God

(therefore translated into local language), **coin =**

salvation not for sale (as in indulgences), **prayer = individual salvation.**

c. Both slave-owners and missionaries used the Bible to support their opposing positions.

d. Capitein prioritised slaves' spiritual freedom over their physical freedom and did not call for slavery to be abolished.

2: THE BIBLE ON SLAVERY

LESSON CONTENT

a. Ask groups to read the two passages from Paul on pp. 12–13 and answer questions 1–3. Ask for a sample of students' answers. Ask if slavery is Paul's main concern in these passages? Invite reasons for those who are able to argue that Paul does or does not endorse slavery.

b. Watch this clip describing how slave-owners justified slavery using the Bible: www.youtube.com/watch?v=rDV1e1yPpk0

Ask for reactions to Susan Wise Bauer's argument that Paul's reference to slaves is 'descriptive', and the slave-owners used the reference as 'prescriptive'.

Explore this claim with students and ensure understanding of her argument.

c. Return to p. 13 and answer question 4. What does the Genesis passage imply about all humans?

Return to the arguments given for and against slavery on p. 10, stuck in two columns in books. Find an argument that supports the view expressed in Genesis 1:27 and share with the class.

FURTHER INFORMATION

a. Paul instructs slaves to obey their masters. Therefore he does not disagree with slavery. His priority seems to be loyalty, hard work and faith in Jesus.

b. Susan Wise Bauer argues that Paul's reference to slaves simply 'describes' the fact that they existed. But he does not 'prescribe' them, in other words, argue they *should* exist.

c. All humans are made 'in the image of God', therefore all humans are of equal value.

3: IS CHANGE INEVITABLE?

LESSON CONTENT

- a. If all humans are made in the image of God, ask students how they think slaver-owners justified their ownership and abuse of slaves?

To answer this question display these quotes by slave-owners regarding their slaves:

‘[I] might as well Baptize a Puppy, as a certain young Negro’.

(Godwyn, M. (1685), *Negro's and Indians Advocate*.)

‘Negroes must not be saved and that a baptized Negro is no more than kindling wood for the flames of hell’.

(Sensbach, J.F. (2005), *Rebecca's Revival* (MA: Harvard University Press).)

- b. We know that slavery was eventually abolished. Ask students how they think this change occurred? Teach that various Protestant groups mobilised and managed to effect a huge change in public opinion.

Read about these various movements and arguments on p. 14 on the ‘Abolition Movements and Arguments’ sheet.

Ask groups to identify THREE arguments and THREE campaigns that they think would be persuasive in changing peoples’ minds.

Listen to ideas around the room. Discuss why these arguments or campaigns seem persuasive.

Extension: ask for examples of modern campaign or mass mobilisation techniques that students are aware of, such as JustGiving, 38 Degrees, charity campaigns, marches, etc. Make links between the early abolition campaigns and modern techniques.

- c. Return to the instances of modern slavery explored at the beginning of lesson 5. Students have their ‘gut’ reaction to the idea of slavery. Ask them to reflect on this initial reaction in light of their learning. Do they still feel the same?

Compare students’ initial arguments to slavery to the quotes reflecting how black slaves were dehumanised. Ask students to reflect if the anti-slavery movement involved a re-humanising of the slaves?

Conclude with a discussion of this question: ‘Is change inevitable?’

FURTHER INFORMATION

- a. These quotes reflect the level of dehumanisation white slave-owners employed to justify their subjugation of black people.

- c. Is change historically contingent, i.e. due to the presence of key people and events? Or is change inevitable, it is just the details which are contingent?

Slavery Facts and Figures

In Adam Hochschild's book on the history of the slave trade, *Bury the Chains*, he states some surprising figures. According to Hochschild, three quarters of the world's population lived in some kind of slavery, serfdom or bonded employment at the close of the eighteenth century. This means the vast majority of people alive were not free or in control of their lives. In some regions, such as some American states, this meant there were greater populations of slaves than free people.

At the height of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, around eighty thousand people were captured, imprisoned and shipped to the Americas every year.

Hochschild, A. (2005), *Bury the Chains* (London: Pan Macmillan).

Alec Ryrie, in his book about the history of Protestants, addresses the issue of slavery. The Bible, Ryrie argues, suggests the humane treatment of slaves but does not propose slavery should be abolished. Slavery was the norm, often seen as a form of employment. Indeed, the Roman Empire in which Christianity developed was a society based on slavery.

Cruelty to slaves was seen in negative terms, but a view that slavery itself was not morally acceptable did not exist in a significant form. Like the poor, slaves should be treated with some dignity, but like poverty, slavery was a fact of life.

As the Protestant churches grew in the Reformation period, so was the trans-Atlantic slave trade growing. By the 1590s, with the emergence of Protestant churches, the trans-Atlantic slave trade was almost a hundred years old.

Ryrie, A. (2017), *Protestants: The Faith that Made the Modern World* (London: Viking).

Suggested Images:

The 'Tree of Forgetfulness' or the 'Gateway of no Return' in Ouidah, Benin, West Africa – the port from which hundreds of thousands of slaves were taken. Info on this 'From our own Correspondent' webpage: [news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/from_our_own_correspondent/5321484.stm](https://www.bbc.com/news/1/hi/programmes/from_our_own_correspondent/5321484.stm)

'Slave ship': find diagrams and sketches of how slaves were transported to the American colonies and the Caribbean.

This website details the influences of slave-owners' vast fortunes on British geography. On the left column, regions are listed (London, Bristol and the South West, Liverpool and the North West, Yorkshire, the Midlands). Find your region to see the impact riches from this trade: [historicengland.org.uk/research/inclusive-heritage/the-slave-trade-and-abolition/sites-of-memory/slave-traders-and-plantation-wealth/britain-and-the-slave-trade](https://www.historicengland.org.uk/research/inclusive-heritage/the-slave-trade-and-abolition/sites-of-memory/slave-traders-and-plantation-wealth/britain-and-the-slave-trade)

Find stills from *12 Years a Slave*.

Benjamin Lay Factfile

Originally from Essex, England, Lay moved to the American colony of Pennsylvania in the 1730s. He was a Quaker (a Protestant group who rejected cruel and dehumanising authority).

Lay was passionately opposed to capital punishment and slavery. Once he burst into a meeting of Quakers. He was dressed as a soldier. He took out his Bible and, crying that slavery was the same as murder, stabbed his sword into the Bible. The book gushed red liquid. Lay had secreted a juice-filled bladder inside.

Arguments Surrounding Slavery

<p>Slavery is a fact of life. It cannot be eradicated. It is much more practical and realistic to work towards humane conditions for slaves and making sure slave-owners adhere to principles regarding their treatment.</p>	<p>African peoples are simple and childlike. Agricultural and domestic labour suits them entirely. They have been liberated from squalid conditions in Africa and brought to the New World.</p>
<p>The free poor are much worse off than many slaves; starving and destitute, they have absolutely nothing.</p>	<p>Slavery is a form of employment. Slaves are fed and housed. It is not in slave-owners’ interests to mistreat their own slaves.</p>
<p>In reality slave-owners’ total control means the slaves are disposable. Couples are split up, children sold, female slaves routinely raped and many simply worked to death.</p>	<p>The Bible doesn’t suggest slavery be abolished, but slaves should obey their masters and masters accept their slaves are equal in Christ.</p>
<p>Africans are savages. In slavery to white Christians they can be civilised.</p>	<p>All humans can attain salvation in Christ, whether slaves or free, male or female, black or white, rich or poor.</p>
<p>Africans are less human than white Europeans. Slavery suits their station.</p>	<p>God favours the white races over the dark-skinned races.</p>
<p>The buying and selling of Africans as slaves, as well as this resource of free labour on British-owned plantations in the Caribbean, is making Britain a wealthy and powerful nation.</p>	<p>Slaves should have the spiritual freedom to join the Christian community, but they don’t need physical freedom to gain salvation.</p>

Jacobus Elisa Johannes Capitein Factfile

Jacobus Capitein was 8 when, in 1725, he was kidnapped from his parents in Ghana and sold into slavery. His African name was lost and he was given the name Jacobus Elisa Johannes Capitein by his Dutch master. At the time, Britain and the Netherlands were the major players in the trans-Atlantic slave trade. Luckily for Capitein, his master treated him as a son rather than a slave, having him educated and baptised as a Christian. He turned out to be an excellent student and in 1737 entered the University of Leiden, to study Theology and become a minister in the Dutch Reformed Church.

An African studying at a European university and becoming a minister was extremely unusual. Capitein may have been the first.

With his education and freedom, Capitein did not demand an end to African slavery. Rather, he wished to travel back to Ghana to bring Christianity to the country of his birth. He wrote a dissertation arguing that slavery does not contravene Christian principles.

Capitein wrote partly in response to a previous argument by a Dutch minister, Godefridus-Corneliszoon Udemans, that slaves should be baptised and then freed after seven years. This

effectively meant that no slave-owners allowed their slaves to become Christians, preferring to keep them as useful property.

The principle aim of Capitein's thesis was to persuade Dutch slave-owners to baptise their slaves into Christianity. They were reluctant to do this, fearing that once African slaves had become Christian like their white owners, they would be viewed as equals and would have to be released from bondage. This debate was occurring all over Europe: whether to baptise African slaves and give them the chance of salvation, or whether in bringing them into Christianity, the teachings of Jesus demanded their freedom. By the eighteenth century all major European economies were dependent on the slave trade, for the money earned by slavers, for the riches plundered from African lands and for the armies of unpaid labourers who cost their owners almost nothing.

Capitein prioritised the souls of Africans, arguing that they should be baptised, but could remain the property of their owners. Capitein argued that as long as slaves had the chance of salvation, and could be seen as spiritual equals, their earthly conditions were unimportant.

The Bible on Slavery

Read these passages. They are instructions sent by Paul to his churches in Colossus (letter to the Colossians) and Ephesus (letter to the Ephesians).

‘Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to curry their favour, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord.’ (Colossians 3:22)

‘Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ.’ (Ephesians 6:5)

1. Do you think these passages endorse slavery?

Now read the passages in a wider context:

‘Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged. Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to curry their favour, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters ...’ (Colossians 3:21–23)

‘Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. Obey them not only to win their favour when their eye is on you, but as slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart.’ (Ephesians 6:5–6)

2. What connection does Paul make between being a good Christian and hard work?

3. Look at your answer to question 1. Do you think these passages endorse slavery?

Read this passage:

**So God created mankind in his own image,
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.
(Genesis 1:27)**

4. What does the Genesis passage suggest about all humans?

Abolition Movements and Arguments

<p>As European and American traders began to do business with Africans, rather than kidnap and enslave them, they saw they were intelligent and cultured.</p>	<p>In the American Civil War (1775–83) black slaves joined the troops and fought just like any other soldier. Many earned their freedom through their participation.</p>	<p>Frederick Douglas was born as a slave in the US but escaped in 1838. He was a convincing and persuasive speaker who taught other slaves to read, even though it was forbidden.</p>
<p>John Wesley, founder of the Methodist Church, wrote that ‘Freedom is unquestionably the birth right of all mankind; <i>Africans</i> as well as <i>Europeans</i>: to keep the former in a state of slavery, is a constant violation of that right, and therefore also of justice.’</p>	<p>In Britain, Methodists, Quakers and other Nonconformist churches embarked upon a campaign to change public opinion. First they gathered 1.5 million signatures in a mass petition (in a population of 10 million).</p>	<p>Protestant objectors to the slave trade argued that the Bible demanded the loving and fair treatment of all humans, and slavery was simply unacceptable.</p>
<p>A religious argument against slavery was the fear that slaves, while in a state of subjugation, would not be able to freely accept Jesus, and so be saved.</p>	<p>Huge numbers of ordinary English members of Protestant churches were mobilised. They boycotted sugar grown on slave plantations, signed petitions, distributed material and attended talks and meetings.</p>	<p>William Wilberforce, a prominent British Abolitionist, revealed the cruelty and barbarity of slavery in many speeches and petitions.</p>
<p>The British navy, one of the strongest in the world, closed ports against slave-trading ships belonging to other nations or otherwise obstructed their progress.</p>	<p>Methodist, Baptist and Anglican missionaries from Britain had been developing new churches in the Caribbean among slave communities. White pastors in the Caribbean were willing to fight and die to abolish slavery.</p>	<p>Samuel Sewall, American judge: ‘It is most certain that all Men, as they are the Sons of Adam... have equal Right unto Liberty’.</p>

Wesley quote: Wesley, J. (1778), *Thoughts upon Slavery*. © This work is the property of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. It may be used freely by individuals for research, teaching and personal use as long as this statement of availability is included in the text. docsouth.unc.edu/church/wesley/wesley.html

Sewall quote: Sewall, S. (1700), ‘The Selling of Joseph: A Memorial (1700)’. *Electronic Texts in American Studies*. 26. digitalcommons.unl.edu/etas/26