

# FOR THE LOVE OF GOD + -

## SLAVERY IN “CHRISTIAN” AMERICA

This segment comes from **EPISODE 2: RIGHTS + WRONGS**.

Modern Westerners take it for granted that every life is valuable. But ideas like equality before the law and the importance of caring for the vulnerable are by no means self-evident. So where did they come from? Why are we so attached to the idea of “inalienable human rights”? This segment looks at the part that Christianity played in the history of slavery in America ... for better, and for worse.

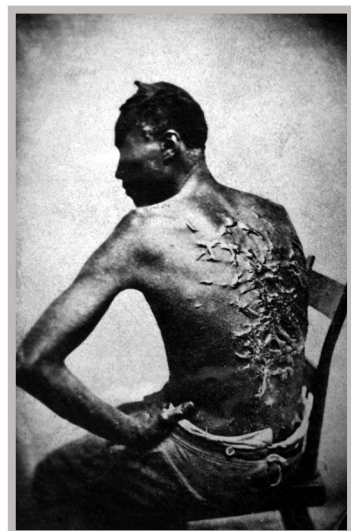
### THEME QUESTION

Plot where you think Christianity falls on the scale between oppression and freedom.



### ENGAGE

1. Create a PowerPoint slide with three words, three images, and three emojis that describe the word “slavery”. Explain your choices.
2. What observations can you make about the following images of slavery in the United States in the 1800s? What is your reaction to these images?



3. Listen to the song "Queen of the Field" by Alicia Keys, and read the lyrics ([cpx.video/aliciakeys](http://cpx.video/aliciakeys)). What further insights does this give you about the experience of slavery in the United States?
4. Imagine you are one of the people depicted or described in the above images or song. What would you like to say to your master?

## UNDERSTAND AND EVALUATE



**WATCH** the segment: "Slavery in 'Christian' America" ([cpx.video/slavery](http://cpx.video/slavery))

1. Draw or find an image to contrast the experiences of slaves on plantations in the United States, and the plantation owners.
2. Make a list of some of the basic rights and freedoms that were denied to slaves.

1.
2.
3.
4.

3. How was the Bible misused by the slave masters to justify their actions?
4. How did the slaves respond to Christianity? Why might this have been unexpected?
5. The Biblical idea that every person is made in the "image of God" means that every person has inherent equality and dignity.
  - a. How did this idea inspire the slaves in America?
  - b. What evidence is there that slave owners ignored this idea?

- 6 In your own words, write a one-sentence summary of the following quote from Frederick Douglass.

I love the pure, peaceable, and impartial Christianity of Christ: I therefore hate the corrupt, slave-holding, women-whipping, cradle-plundering, partial and hypocritical Christianity of the land. Indeed, I can see no reason, but the most deceitful one, for calling the religion of this land Christianity.

Frederick  
Douglass

- 7 In Uncle Tom's Cabin, Harriet Beecher Stowe writes about a slave warehouse where husbands, wives, brothers, sisters, fathers, mothers, and young children could be sold separately. Explain why this was an especially cruel part of the system of slavery.

## BIBLE FOCUS

**READ** the following summary of the Biblical story of the Exodus.

God's people are in Egypt. They are slaves. They are forced into manual labour and often pushed beyond their limits. At one stage, the Pharaoh orders all male children under two years old to be killed.

The people cry out to God, and he hears them.

God raises up Moses to take them out of slavery and into his Promised Land.

1. What might this story reveal about the character of God?
2. Why do you think slaves in America were inspired and strengthened by this story?

**READ James 5:1-6.**

3. What does James say is coming on the people he speaks against in this passage, and why?
4. What parallels might there be between the type of people referenced in this passage, and the slave owners?
5. What is your reaction to the words of judgment in this passage? When it comes to the brutal practice of slavery, do you think this judgment is justified?

**READ Galatians 3:26-28.**

6. Create an anti-slavery poster based on these verses.

**A APPLY**

1. Write a letter to a “Christian” slave owner in the 1800s in America’s South that challenges their practices. Use one or all of the Bible passages from this lesson.
2. Look at the image of a billboard that was erected in Pennsylvania in 2012 by an atheist group, shown in this Religion News Service article “[Atheists’ slavery billboard raises tempers in Pa](#)” ([cpx.video/billboard](#)).
  - a. Considering the argument that Jesus was concerned first with individual change, not with social revolution, and that just a few Christians could not overthrow the entire Roman system of slavery, read Colossians 3:22-4:1 and discuss whether this billboard accurately represents the meaning of the passage.
  - b. Design your own billboard that responds to this billboard, drawing on a Bible passage referenced in this lesson.
3. Look at this infographic about modern slavery ([cpx.video/modernslavery](#)).
  - a. List some modern examples of slavery and/or oppression, both in Australia and globally.
  - b. Brainstorm some steps our government could take to fight modern slavery.

 **EXTEND**

- 1.** Research a Christian organisation that is fighting against modern slavery. Some examples include Hagar, A21, The Freedom Project, and International Justice Mission. Create a PowerPoint or Prezi presentation outlining:
  - a.** What they do
  - b.** Their history
  - c.** Where they work
  - d.** The values that underpin their work
  - d.** One personal testimony from someone who has been impacted by their work