

Religion and American Colonial Slavery

Student Guide

Lesson I. Religion's Impact on Shaping American Colonial Slavery

Begin the Lesson

Visit the [Student Learning Hub](#) to begin Lesson I of the *Religion and American Slavery* series. At the bottom of each online step, you will find a button to proceed to the next step. Individual steps are also listed below with hyperlinks, which you can access if you are viewing this document on a digital device.

Questions to Check for Understanding

[Step 1. American Slavery](#)

1. Who practiced slavery anciently? (Anciently means in the distant past.)
2. Why did American colonists not question the morality of slavery when it began in the American colonies?
3. Why was it easier to enslave Africans in America than other groups, like the Indigenous peoples?

[Step 2. Colonial Social Hierarchy](#)

1. In the hierarchy of colonial American society, or the social ladder, who was held at the top as the most important and who was held at the bottom as the least important?
2. In colonial American society, who could use physical punishments on others without any social consequences?

Step 3. Religion's Impact on Shaping American Colonial Slavery

1. How did American planters justify enslaving Africans?
2. In 1660, why did Reverend Godwyn who was visiting from England believe the American planters corrupted Christianity?

Step 4. Christian Reform of Slavery

1. Why did enslavers push back on Christian ministers' request to teach slaves Christianity?
2. What did most Christian ministers argue would happen to slaves if they learned Christianity?

Prepare for Class Discussion

Step 5. Prepare for Class Discussion

1. What were some of the societal norms in colonial America that made slavery possible?
2. How did American planters use religion to justify their enslavement of Africans?
3. How did these factors make it possible to treat enslaved Africans as "other" in society?
4. What happens when a group is treated as "other" in society?