

Survival in a Permissive Society: Biblical Spiritual Strategies

Adesanya Adebowale Afolarin O. Ojewole John Henry Chukwudi Osaro Hope
Adegbenle Funmilayo

Division of Spiritual Life, Babcock University, Ilishan-Remo, Ogun State. Nigeria

Abstract

Modern society is slowly but surely slipping into sadism and carnage. Sinful and appalling behavior once termed intolerable have now become acceptable in today's permissive society. Zig Ziglar states: "If God would have wanted us to live in a permissive society He would have given us Ten Suggestions and not Ten Commandments." "Freedom for all" is the destructive secular maxim, which has now paved way for immoral activities which were formerly referred to as unacceptable or even criminalized e.g. homosexuality, premarital sex, abortion, religious crisis, terrorism, insurgencies, corruption and substance abuse among the youths. The formula for survival as Christians in a permissive society involves following the Bible as the standard of faith and practice. The society must not jettison the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:3-17), which are the bases of every moral attitude and behavior. This research extrapolate what constitutes permissiveness within a given society. It also discussed permissiveness on the individual, societal, universal, and spiritual spheres. And finally identify the various spiritual strategies that can be used to survive as a Christian in a permissive society from the biblical perspective.

Keywords: Spiritual Strategy, Survival, Permissive Society, Bible, Immorality, and Teenagers

Introduction

The book of Psalm 82:5 NKJV states that "They know not, neither will they understand, they walk on in darkness: all the foundation of the earth are out of course". How precise are these predictions of the Psalmist. With the foundation of earth out of course, our societies walk in darkness and misunderstanding. Human societies over the decades have evolved from one era to the other. From the Stone Age era to the primitive society, to modern society and postmodern society, human society have evolved and transformed. With every changing phase, societal attitudes, perspectives, approaches, behaviors, culture and religious values and practices changes. Religious and cultural values, beliefs and practices once considered absolute, acceptable and unchanging are now viewed as relic of the past whereas practices once considered perverse and unpardonable now prevailed. These attitudinal changes regarding religious, moral and cultural beliefs and practices; departure from religious and cultural foundational practices, gradual disregard for absolute moral and ethical standard of behavior and practices and lower tolerant level for moral, religious and ethical conducts and practices in some way constitute what is permissiveness in our society.

As societies tilt more and more towards freedom for all and rejection of absolute and objective moral values, we now allow racial and religious elements, sexual minorities, children disowning their parents, drug and alcohol abuse, family values are decaying and every kind of diversity imaginable. The question is where does it end?

The prevailing social permissiveness have resulted into unacceptable immoral activities such as homosexuality, premarital sex, abortion, pornography, substance abuse, religious crisis, lack of value for human life and terrorism. The resulting societies constitute moral and spiritual assault, offensive and a treat to the moral and religious sense, well-being and sanity especially to those oppose to such religious and moral misconduct and practices hence the need to fashion spiritual strategies for surviving in such society.

Survival is to remain religiously and morally uncorrupted and uninfluenced in conduct and practice by the permissiveness in the society. It means to strictly adhere and remain committed to biblical teachings as the standard of faith and practice and final authority over life issues.

What Constitute Permissiveness within a Given Society?

A permissive society can be referred to as a society which acknowledges no fixed moral principles: also referred to as a society whereby "anything goes". In theoretically, there is a confining principle, which indicates that; nothing is really wrong, and anything can be probably right; it all depends on individual's perspective towards what is actually right and wrong. Young people have now grown into a society where they have been imparted that there are no outright and objective moral values, but rather, everything is relative and subjective. Meaning that nothing is sacred, nothing merits absolute respect (Cormacburke, 2011).

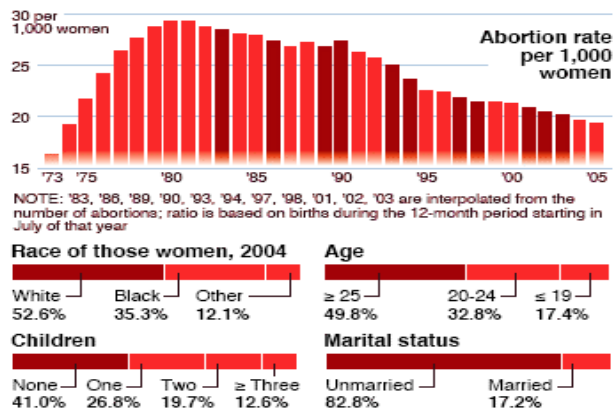
Abortion in Permissive Society

Permissive societies has now become a stimulating factor for sexual impulses. Sexual obsession has now become the ordeal in a permissive society, whereby giving rise to the appalling number of unborn babies being aborted in every country of the world. This increase was facilitated by the legalization of abortion in many countries across the world, with the concept of "population control". Countries like, Denmark and Sweden and in the United

States of America, even minors permits abortions on request even without parental approval or consent. In America over 1.5 million unborn babies are killed every year, one-third of whom are babies of teenagers.

Abortion rate down in recent years

More than half the roughly 1.2 million U.S. women who have abortions each year are white but the rate is much higher for blacks and Hispanics. Half the women who have abortions are 25 or older.



SOURCES: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; Guttmacher Institute AF

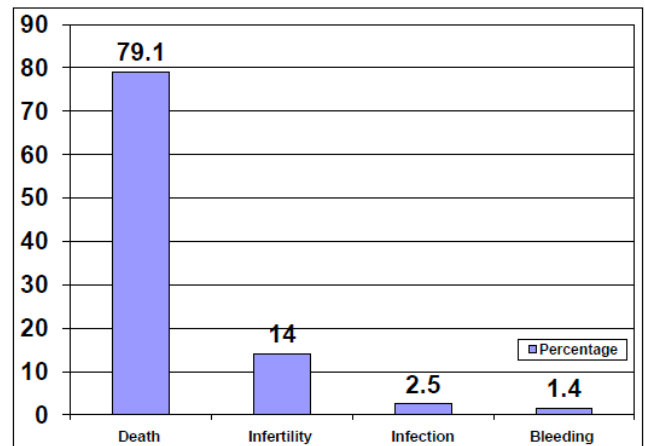


FIGURE 1
 Health consequences of illegal abortion

(Google.com.ng, 2015)

When one adds to this figure the many more million unborn babies aborted every year around the world, it is mind-boggling to think what price potential babies are paying for the irresponsible sexual conduct of millions of persons (Caswell, 2015).

In Nigeria, Abortion is permitted to save the life of the woman, to preserve physical health, and to preserve mental health. Nigeria has two abortion laws: one for the northern states and one for the southern states. Both laws specifically allow abortions to be performed to save the life of the woman (Worrell, 2015).

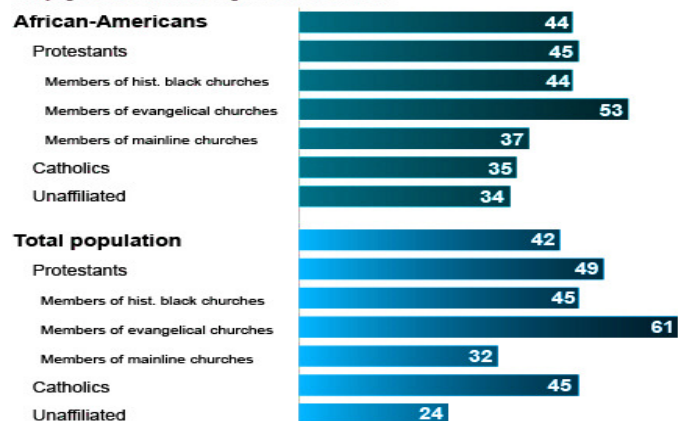
In Nigeria abortion is legally regulated, except in cases that involves saving the life of the mother. But at least 760,000 abortions happen every year, mostly outside the legal parameters, and from 3,000 to 34,000 women die annually from unsafe abortions, according to reports by the Guttmacher Institute and the government of Nigeria. Previous studies have revealed that Nigeria has one of the highest rates of maternal death in the world, with 545 per 100,000 live births in 2008, though estimates vary. Which has caused half of the deaths of pregnant women in the country (Paluku, Mabuza, Maduna & Ndimande, 2010).

In the year 2001, the former president of Nigeria, Goodluck Jonathan, guaranteed \$33 million to increase funding for contraceptives and encouraged all states within the country to provide free contraception in public health centers and hospitals. The program led to a controversy between the federal government and the Catholic organizations calling for the money to be redirected to education and other health issues.

Meanwhile, Imo State passed a law that would have legalized abortion in cases of incest, rape, or mental or physical health challenges for the mother. Some abortion-rights activists perceived this policy as victory. But after intense lobbying by the Catholic Medical Practitioners Association, the state assembly revoked the law (Oye-Adeniran, Adewole, Odeyemi, Ekanem & Umoh, 2005).

Opposition to Abortion

% saying abortion should be illegal in most or all cases



Source: Pew Forum U.S. Religious Landscape Survey, conducted in 2007, released in 2008

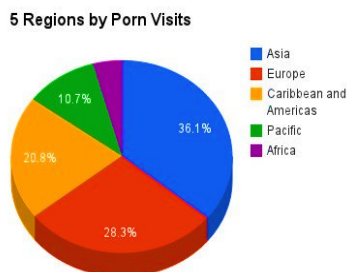
Question wording: Do you think abortion should be legal in all cases, legal in most cases, illegal in most cases, or illegal in all cases? [RESPONSE OPTIONS READ IN REVERSE ORDER TO HALF OF SAMPLE]

(Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project, 2009)

With this scenarios we can affirm that the concept of Abortionism has been a global phenomenon and a treat to humankind. According to Cormacburke, (2011) in his view states that to legalize abortion is to legalize violence in a country, and that a society that does not fight to resist abortionists will therefore soon fight against terrorists. Which will be a lost battle.

Pornography in a Permissive Society

During the 20th century, there was an increase in pornographic visuals and print materials with unequivocal sexual contents enhanced through the impact and convergence of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), thus making the production, distribution and consumption (viewing) of pornographic contents very easy (Google.com.ng, 2015)



<http://www.covenanteyes.com/2013/02/19/pornography-statistics/>

“Change” is said is the only aspect of life that is constant in nature, because every time somewhere, changes occur, and when it occurs, it can bring positive or negative effects, which can become widespread, unpredictable and problematic, thereby calling for caution. The pornographer or, more specifically, the pornographer's client - the person dominated and obsessed by sex - will equally exploit others if he can; for other people interest him only insofar as they can serve his obsessive appetite.

According to Google, (2015) pornography can be defined as a “printed or visual material containing the explicit description or display of sexual organs or activity, intended to stimulate sexual excitement”. Also, the tragic effects of pornography (pornographic movies) has received less or no attention by the government and the society, but rather viewed as normal trend of modernization and this has triggered the spread of its distribution and a must present features in every local and international movies, and advertisements and magazines. According to the research findings of Gilkerson, (2013) which reveals that on a average, 17% of performers usually use condoms in heterosexual porn movies, While 66% of porn performers have herpes, and 7% of porn performers living with HIV and STDs.

Sex has been regarded as a divine gift, a sacred function by which human love is, in marriage, given a unique expression of union that associates it with God's creativity. Mostly in Nigeria, the sales of porn videos and magazines have been publicly sold along major roads and cities in the country, and other porn video rental

shops across the country. Pornography can also lead to an increase in the urge to bring imaginations into reality, which has led to rape, fornication, adultery, infidelity, emotional and psychological trauma, addictions, and even death in cases to cover ones tracks.

Marital Permissiveness in a Society

Homosexuality

Another evolving cankerworm in our time is homosexuality. The first mention of this sin is found in the book of Genesis 19:5, where the men of Sodom surrounded Lot's house and demanded him by force to hand over to them two male visitors that had arrived at his house, so that they could "have sex with them." The name of the city became descriptive of male prostitution, "sin of sodomy," which is condemned by the prophets, Jesus, and the authors of the New Testament. (Deuteronomy 23:17; 2 Kings 23:7; Isa. 1:10; Ezekiel 16:46; Matthew 11:23; Revelation 11:8; Jude 7). Sodom and Gomorrah became the byword for male prostitution and serve as examples of God's wrath on such sin. It is difficult to estimate how the widespread of homosexuality and lesbianism has eloped our society, because it is secret affair that many are still afraid to come out into the open, for fear of stigmatization, receiving social rejection and harming their job security. All this is as a result of permissiveness in our society.

The growing influence of homosexuals in the church, is evident as the Internet has been used as a platform for campaigns, promotions and communication of their practice. A national magazine called "Kingship" is published by so-called religious practitioners who are homosexuals and lesbians. The magazine announces special events such as gay camp meeting and gay marriages (Caswell, 2015). According to the General Conference President of the Seventh day Adventist Church, Ted Wilson, He states that "Homosexuality is a manifestation of the disturbance and brokenness in human inclinations and relations caused by the entrance of sin into the world." However, President Ted Wilson made a current appeal for consideration, saying "[Christ] was never rude, never needlessly spoke a severe word, and never gave needless pain to a sensitive soul. He further said that the Guidelines adopted by church leadership in 2104 state that, "We reaffirm, without hesitation, our long-standing position as expressed in the Church's Fundamental Beliefs: 'Marriage was divinely established in Eden and affirmed by Jesus to be a lifelong union between a man and a woman in loving companionship.'" The celebration of same-sex marriages is forbidden by the church (Human Rights Campaign, 2015).

Freedom and Abuses of Censorship in a Permissive Society

The word 'Freedom for all' sounds more like a noble maxim. Censorship has followed the free expressions of humans like a shadow throughout history. Previously for example China, censorship was considered a legitimate law for regulating the moral and political life of their citizens (Mette Newth 2010). Like all countries, Nigeria is striving hard to protect her citizens, especially the young from unsuitable content been viewed via various media. Nigerian movies and the influx of foreign cultural imports. Of course, censorship alone is not sufficient to maintain the moral tone of our society, as the industry, artists and the community at large has to play a significant role in determining what society as whole considers to be acceptable standards for media content. Hence it is a shared responsibility among the various stakeholders, with censorship being complemented by public education for greater media awareness (Nfvc.gov.ng, 2015).

The prevalence of no censorship has now become a major attribute to advertise alcohols, drugs and cigarettes for consumptions and all this is made to manifest through the freedom for all ideology. The Nigerian anti-tobacco campaign, have been sensitizing the public on the grounds that smoking is harmful to one's health, has been extraordinarily successful over the past forty years.

Parenting at Home

There is a saying that says "Charity begins at home", parents are highly responsible for the upbringing of their child, and are regarded as the earthly parents of their children. Parents also have a greater influence on their children through each decisions they take, either spiritual, physical or mental. The society has given a lot of responsibility parents to nature their wards into being an egalitarian citizen of their society. Negligence of parents in keying into this functions can pave way for moral misconduct of their wards. With the convergence of ICT and the internet, today's youth are been exposed to a lot of things that may hamper their moral standards. Children have a right to their parents' it is up to parents to combat the moral contamination of the atmosphere where their children have to breathe and grow in, albeit less efforts from the public authorities. Parents have to do more. They cannot be afraid to exercise authority with their children and to make demands of them (Cormacburke, 2011).

Suggested Spiritual Strategies for Survival in a Permissive Society

Adherence to Biblical Foundation

"Remove not the ancient landmark, which thy fathers have set" (Proverb 22:28, 23:10). This was the admonition

from the good book. The first strategy for surviving permissive influence in my opinion is to have a Biblical/Spiritual Foundation. How precise and relevant was the question raised by psalmist in Psalm 11:3, "If the foundation be destroyed what can the righteous do"? Foundation is everything. In a world where anything and everything goes, the only anchor of the soul is a Biblical/Spiritual foundation. Without a spiritual foundation, the believer will be swayed by the tides of events, social currents and storms of life. According to the Psalmist, once the foundation is out of course, "They know not, neither will they understand, they walk on in darkness: all the foundation of the earth are out of course" Psalm 82:5, what exist are disorder, instability, confusion, staggering, and darkness.

Recent events around the world are clear manifestations of a 'foundation out of course' and a clear departure from the word of God particular the ten commandment (Exodus 20:3-17). With the legislation of adultery as lawful once it is for commercial purpose in Japan, legalization of same sex marriage and abortion in US, Canada and South Africa, it is clear societies have departed from Biblical foundation (Romans 1:20-32) and it gradually on the move towards lawlessness. A society is not only lawless when there are no laws or when society is not law abiding but also when societies reject the principles of absolute and objective moral values and assume everything is relative and subject.

Biblical consideration

Furthermore, to survive in our permissive society, it is necessary to always consider and determine issues relating to human conducts and behavior from the Biblical perspectives. The departure from Biblical stands on human conducts and practices have resulted into our present permissive state (Psalm 19:7-14, 119:9&11). The attempt to contemplate and determined human conducts, behaviors and actions from other perspectives such as psychology, sociology, cultural and ethical basis and neglecting the position of the word of God on such issues have resulted in permissiveness, denial of justice and encouragement of anti-social behavior. It is a dangerous thing to reject or neglect the biblical counsel (Proverb 1:25& 30), "But ye have set at naught my counsel, would none of my reproof". If a society gives first and most important priority to Biblical position on issues relating to human conducts and practices and other considerations such as psychology, physical, cultural, social and ethics considerations are made secondary, there will be standard.

Adherence to Biblical Marital Model

One factor that has contributed in no small measure to the development of permissiveness in our society and has become one area of obvious permissiveness is the family. Closely connected to this and also as her off shoots are divorce, homosexual, abortion, pornography and sexual abuse. The family is the nucleus of the society. It is a subset of the society. The society is a reflection of the family. If there is permissiveness at home, there will be permissiveness in the society. The family feeds and bred the society. It is from the family that society grows. A family where anything goes and there is no restriction will ultimately bred a society where anything goes and nothing is restricted.

The family is confronted and besieged on all front. With increase rate of divorce, contract marriage, marital infidelity, cohabitation, sexual promiscuity, same sex marriage, abortion, the biblical model of marriage is gradually disappearing. Now we've accepted it to the extent that gay people can adopt children. This absurd state of affairs - a dangerous social experiment that is reminiscent of revolutionary communism - will destroy the family and normalize what is an unhealthy and dangerous sexual deviancy. Gay marriage is another absurd manifestation of this deviancy as marriage is for one man and one woman. Anything else is dangerous and unhealthy.

The increase rate of divorce and children from outside wedlock has created large population of homeless children which have become a breeding ground for drug proliferation, sexual promiscuity and abortion. The failure of traditional marital practice is largely the grand excuse for homosexual practices and same sex marriage. To survive the permissiveness in our society, it is necessary to adhere and return to the biblical and spiritual injunction and model of marriage where premarital sex is forbidden, adultery, fornication and homosexual is a sin and divorce is despised (Malachi 2:14-16).

Exchange of Role between the Church and the society

Prior to the present time, religious influence was strong such that social activities and responsibilities are under the control and determined by the Church. During this period, churches determine the standard of right and wrong. The society follows the direction of the church. However in recent times it seems the roles have shifted. For example in the debate over legality of homosexual abortion and divorce, more emphasis are given to other consideration such as the psychological effect and compositions, economic and social effect and responsibility of such practices while little considerations are given to the spiritual implication. It seems the society now determined its own direction while the church either follows or remain undecided. The era when churches dictate the social dimension and ethical practices seems to be no more

Self – Control

Another spiritual strategy for surviving a permissive society is self-control. Self –control is one of the fruit of the spirit according to Galatian 5:22-23. One of challenges confronting this present generation and responsible for

the present state of permissiveness is instant gratification. Our unwillingness to repress our gratification for sexual desire outside the confinement of marriage, the experimentation with drugs and other lustful pleasure has brought about permissiveness in our society. Self-censorship is simply one expression of self-control, and self-control is essential for individual and social freedom. No one would suggest that self-control is always easy. But it is made a lot easier if one switches on one's mind and exercises a bit of common sense.

'Freedom for all' sounds a noble maxim. But freedom without self-control will not only lead to self – destruction but also destruction of the society. Even though as Christian, we have been set free in Christ (Romans 8:1), we are nevertheless admonish not to use our freedom as occasion for sin (Galatian 5:13). Absolute freedom leads to abuse and lawlessness. A man is free not when he is not ruled by external laws, but when he rules himself; when he is master of himself. And these people do not rule themselves. They are ruled by their passions. And the slavery that comes from within is worse than any slavery imposed from outside.

Self-control means subjecting self (desire, craving, lust, interest and wants) to control (reasoning, rules, regulations). It means not acting under impulse. It means delaying gratification. It pertains to every area of individual, family and societal life. Self-censorship is just part of self-control. And self-control and self-vigilance are essential if one wants to survive.

Media Control

“Keep your mind with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life”. “As a man thinketh so is he”. (Proverb 4:22, 23:7). “Finally, brethren, whatever things are ... think on these things”. (Philippians 4:8). Our actions are product of our thoughts. Our thoughts are reflections of what we feed our senses on. To survive a permissive society, it is necessary to guide the avenues of our minds by exercising control of what we watch and see; what we hear and listen to.

Inadequate media censorship and unhindered access to internet especially the pornography sites explain for rapid increase of the activities in the society.

Conclusion and Remark

This study have brought to the lime light, the formula for survival as Christians in a permissive society involves following the Bible as the standard of faith and practice. The society must not jettison the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:3-17), which are the bases of every moral attitude and behavior.

This research also reveals that permissiveness has a negative effect in today's youth and if not contained that promote various act of immorality and make us vulnerable to sin.

The study also revealed that Self-censorship is just part of self-control. And self-control and self-vigilance are essential if one wants to survive. If there are many people today who don't exercise self-control, is it because they think there are no dangers?

Remember then what you have received and heard; keep that, and repent. If you will not awake, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come upon you" (Rev 3:1-3).

Recommendation

The following recommendations were made:

- Parents should spend more time with their children and counsel them on the path of righteousness.
- Following the Bible should be the standard of faith and practice.
- The Ten Commandment must not be jettisoned as they are the basis of every moral attitude and behavior.

References

- Beaconforfreedom.org, (2015). The Long History of Censorship. Retrieved 10 August 2015, from http://www.beaconforfreedom.org/liste.html?tid=415&art_id=475
- Caswell, S. (2015). THE END TIME SIGNS OF INCREASED WICKEDNESS. Biblesabbath.org. Retrieved 10 August 2015, from <http://www.biblesabbath.org/bacchiocchi/endtimewickedness.html>
- Cormacburke.or.ke,. (2015). 13. The Family and the Permissive Society | www.cormacburke.or.ke. Retrieved 10 August 2015, from <http://www.cormacburke.or.ke/node/1010>
- DoubleGist.com,. (2014). Effects Of Pornographic Films On Nigerian Youths - Project Topics. <http://www.doublegist.com/effects-pornographic-films-nigerian-youths/>
- Gilkerson, L. (2013). Get the Latest Pornography Statistics. Covenant Eyes. Retrieved 10 August 2015, from: <http://www.covenanteyes.com/2013/02/19/pornography-statistics/>
- Google.com.ng,. (2015). statistics of pornographic views in the world - Google Search https://www.google.com.ng/search?q=statistics+of+pornographic+views+in+the+world&biw=13&bih=667&source=lnms&tbnm=isch&sa=X&ved=0CAYQ_AUoAWoVChMIivKes4GfxwIVSuwUCh3vogD1#imgrc=QfH7vnjgPK3_AM%3A
- Human Rights Campaign. (2015). Stances of Faiths on LGBT Issues: Seventh-day Adventist Church. Retrieved 10 August 2015, from <http://www.hrc.org/resources/entry/stances-of-faiths-on-lgbt-issues-seventh-day-adventist-church>

- Nfvcb.gov.ng,. (2015). Welcome to National Film & Video Censors Board. Retrieved 10 August 2015, from:<http://www.nfvcb.gov.ng/pages.asp?pageid=350>
- Oye-Adeniran, B., Adewole, I., Odeyemi, K., Ekanem, E., & Umoh, A. (2005). Contraceptive prevalence among young women in Nigeria. *Journal Of Obstetrics & Gynaecology*, 25(2), 182-185. doi:10.1080/01443610500041156
- Worrell, M. (2015). Nigeria: Abortion Law. *Women on Waves*. Retrieved 10 August 2015, from <https://www.womenonwaves.org/en/page/5015/nigeria--abortion-law>
- Paluku, L., Mabuza, L., Maduna, P., & Ndimande, J. (2010). Knowledge and attitude of schoolgirls about illegal abortions in Goma, Democratic Republic of Congo. *African Journal of Primary Health Care & Family Medicine*, 2(1). doi:10.4102/phcfm.v2i1.78
- Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project,. (2009). A Religious Portrait of African-Americans. Retrieved 11 August 2015, from <http://www.pewforum.org/2009/01/30/a-religious-portrait-of-african-americans/>