

AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH
SPRING 2023
Intermediate
QUARTERLY
MAR-APR-MAY
SUNDAY SCHOOL UNION

JESUS CALLS US



INTERMEDIATE SUNDAY SCHOOL QUARTERLY

Vol. 60
Spring Quarter 2023

MARCH, APRIL, MAY

No. 2
Price \$3.89

----- **Ages 12-14 (Middle School)** -----

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INTERMEDIATE SUNDAY SCHOOL QUARTERLY — USPS 266 - 360

Volume 60, No. 2, March, April, May 2023. An official quarterly of the African Methodist Episcopal Church prepared by the AMEC Sunday School Union. Published quarterly by the AMEC Sunday School Union, 900 13th Avenue South, Nashville, TN 37212. Periodicals Postage Paid at Nashville, Tennessee. Copyright © 2023 by AMEC Sunday School Union.

Postmaster: Send address changes to Intermediate Sunday School Quarterly, 900 13th Avenue South, Nashville, Tennessee 37212.

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**Entered as Periodicals Postage Paid Matter, March 20, 1942, at the
Post Office at Nashville, Tennessee, under the Act of March 3, 1879.**

THE ORDER OF SERVICE

- I. Bell tap or organ voluntary as a signal for silence
- II. Singing
- III. The Apostles' Creed
- IV. Prayer, closing with the Lord's Prayer in concert
- V. Singing
- VI. Calling roll of officers and teachers
- VII. Responsive reading of the lesson text by school
- VIII. The Decalogue

THE LESSON

- I. Organ interlude while the classes are being arranged
- II. Class study of the lesson
- III. Warning bell—5 minutes
- IV. Closing bell—silence

THE CLOSING

- I. Singing
- II. Review and application of the lesson
- III. Secretary's report
- IV. The Church School Creed
- V. Singing
- VI. Benediction

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Rev. Dr. Garland F. Pierce, Editor
Dr. Kabrina Bass, Lessons
A.L. Stanfield, Copy Editor
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THE APOSTLES' CREED

I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried; the third day He arose from the dead, He ascended into heaven and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Church Universal, the communion of the saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.



THE CHURCH SCHOOL CREED

I believe my A.M.E. Church School must grow and grow; and that I must make it a top priority to make it so. Every member a Christian, every Christian a worker, every worker trained so that a worker need not be ashamed. This we ask in Jesus' name.

THE PRODIGAL SON

LESSON SCRIPTURE: LUKE 15:11-32

FOCUS SCRIPTURE: LUKE 15:11-24

Key Verse: *“The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’”*
Luke 15:21

Luke 15:11-24 (NRSV)

11 Then Jesus said, “There was a man who had two sons.

12 The younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me.’ So he divided his property between them.

13 A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living.

14 When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need.

15 So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs.

16 He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything.

17 But when he came to himself he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am

dying of hunger!

18 I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you;

19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands.’”

20 So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him.

21 Then the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’

22 But the father said to his slaves, ‘Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet.

23 And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate;

24 for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!’ And they began to celebrate.”

VOCABULARY

- **Property** – Entity, essence, substance, nature; usually refers to that which belongs to someone.
- **Parable** – A particular form of Jesus’ teaching in the Gospels; an earthly story with a heavenly meaning; an illustration used to stimulate thought; any story with two levels of meaning, literal and figurative; or a fictitious story that narrates a particular event and told in the past tense.
- **Prodigal** – Reckless and extravagant.

INTRODUCTION

Each year, many families gather in a gathering called “Family Reunion.” People travel near and far to meet with family members and reminisce about family stories. Family reunions are planned to bring families together so generations may stay connected.

In a review of Tyler Perry’s “Family Reunion” by the *Independent*, the writer wrote, “(A) 96-year-old aunt arrives at the family reunion; we see a few family members fighting over a game of craps, a few other young ladies barely dressed and dancing provocatively and generally a family that is divided into cliques.” It is a reminder that families are not perfect, and sometimes families make bad choices.

Each of us belongs to a family, and each family is unique to us. Families are not perfect, yet each family is part of our identity and

what makes us who we are.

Does your family have a family reunion? If yes, what do you like most or least? If not, what would it take to get your family together?

BIBLE STORY

Jesus shared a parable about a man with two sons. The younger son asked for his portion of his father's property. The father divided his property between the two sons.

The younger son later left home with all that he had and went away. He wasted all his wealth and had nothing left. After he had wasted everything, the land he was in had a famine. The young son was in need. He found odd jobs including feeding pigs. He was so hungry he considered eating what the pigs were eating. He then came to his senses, thought of his father, and decided to return home. He would apologize to his father and ask to return as a hired servant.

His father saw the son returning and was filled with compassion. He ran to his son, threw his arms around him, and kissed him.

The son apologizes and the father called to his servants to bring clothing for his son. He placed the family ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. The father prepared for a celebration of his son's return. He celebrated his son's return as his son was dead and now alive again, lost and now found. So, they celebrated.

What does the parable tell you about the father? About the son? About forgiveness? About family?

LIFE APPLICATION

Each day we get to make choices. We choose what to wear each day, where to go and what to do. We have the opportunity to choose. How often do you think through the choices made in a day? The young son in Jesus' parable made several choices. Each choice had consequences.

We have a choice as to how we will respond to other's choices. We cannot control what other people choose to do; however, we have full control of our responses. The younger son made some bad choices, yet the father's response was one of forgiveness and reconciliation. How have you responded to others' choices? There are times when choices others make will cause harm to you or your family. You may find that it is difficult to forgive and may feel that it is impossible to reconcile the relationship. Jesus demonstrated in the parable how we should respond when individuals make bad choices which appear to disrespect, cause shame or even embarrassment to ourselves and even within the family.

What actions can we use to help others reconnect with family, community, or congregation after a bad choice?

SUMMARY

The lost or prodigal son is Jesus' demonstration of how a family responds when one member makes terrible choices and leaves the family. The younger son is the example of some-

one who chose to be lost and leaves home. The young son realized he had made a wrong choice and knew to return to his father and seek forgiveness. He confessed that he had made a wrong choice. The father is an example of how the family responds when someone who was lost returns. The father forgave and restored the young son to the family, similar to how God forgives and restores us when we confess our sins or bad choices.

Jesus taught that all should be forgiven, reconciled, and celebrated when those who were lost confess, seek forgiveness, and return. Have you ever lost something valuable? What did you do to find that which you had lost? What was most important to you, the monetary or the sentimental value of the item? Explain.

Remember, the events in the parable NEVER happened; it is an example of a message to share a more profound truth through a story.

CLOSING DEVOTION

Lord, thank you for the parable of the lost son. Help us to learn to forgive as the father in the parable does. Help us to celebrate the return of individuals who were once lost and now they are found. We thank you, God, for the celebration of those who find you. Thank you for helping each of us to discover you. Amen.

ACTIVITY SHEET

Choices we face each day. Briefly describe how you would respond to each of the following. Quickly go through the worksheet and respond. After you complete all your answers, return to each

scenario, and determine if there could be another response.

- “ **A.** Your parent gave you a piece of jewelry that was given to them by their three times removed grandmother (great, great, great grandmother). The jewelry has been shared for generations and you are the seventh generation in the family to receive it. One of your friends at school admires the jewelry and asks if they can wear it. You agree to allow them to wear it to the next class. Later in the day you realize that they did not bring it back to you. When you confront the person regarding the jewelry, you discover they have lost it. What do you do?

What is most important to you: 1) finding the jewelry or 2) explaining to your family what happened?

How important is it to you to recover the lost jewelry?

- B.** It is time to make a choice about the next level of your educational journey, which is the college to attend. You are conflicted about the choice, as one will take you far from your family and friends and the other choice will have you close to home with no more than a 40-minute drive to the campus. You feel your family will feel abandoned if you choose the school further away, yet the school is offering you more resources for your education. The school closer to home does not have the same amenities or availability of resources. Alumni of the school further away are top in their area of study and leave the

school with fantastic job offers.

What is the first consideration you will consider in making the decision? Is the decision easy or difficult, on a scale of 1-5, 1 being extremely easy and 5 being super difficult?

If you choose the school further away, how will you explain it to your family?

What do you believe would cause your family disappointment in your choice?

A CHILD IS GREATEST IN THE KINGDOM

LESSON SCRIPTURE: MATTHEW 18:1-9; MARK 10:15

FOCUS SCRIPTURE: MATTHEW 18:1-9

Key Verse: *“Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.” Matthew 18:4*

Matthew 18:1-9 (NRSV)

1 At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?”

2 He called a child, whom he put among them,

3 and said, “Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

4 Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

5 Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.

6 If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones who believe in me, it would be better for you if a great

millstone were fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea.

7 Woe to the world because of stumbling blocks! Occasions for stumbling are bound to come, but woe to the one by whom the stumbling block comes!

8 If your hand or your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away; it is better for you to enter life maimed or lame than to have two hands or two feet and to be thrown into the eternal fire.

9 And if your eye causes you to stumble, tear it out and throw it away; it is better for you to enter life with one eye than to have two eyes and to be thrown into the hell of fire.”

VOCABULARY

- **Maimed** – Bent, crooked.
- **Kingdom of Heaven** – The spiritual realm over which God reigns as king, or the fulfillment on earth of God’s will.
- **Stumbling Block** – The trigger of a trap on which the bait is placed; when touched by the animal, it springs and causes it to close resulting in entrapment.
- **Welcomes** – To accept an offer deliberately and readily.

INTRODUCTION

Each of us are born in a different time of existence. Society has created what is known as generations to mark time based on when a person is born and what is going on in their culture. There are so many names for different generations in distinct cultures. In the U.S. we have the Silent Generation (before 1940); Boomers (1941-1964); Gen X (1965-1980); Gen Y (aka Millennials) (1982-2000); Gen Z (2000-2020); Gen Alpha (2020-); Norway has Dessert; Frosting; Ivory or Serious for its generations; South Africa has similar names to the U.S. However, after 1988 they go in a different direction with Generation C for Content Generation (1988-1993); Born-Free “Digital Natives” (born after 1994), Internet G (1996-2010), and Generation Alpha (after 2010). What does all this mean? It means that we all have different values and practices based on the time for which we were born and what was happening in society.

Technology has a huge role to play on our generational identity as some people were born before technology (BBT=Born Before Technology); those born during technology (BDT=Born During Technology); or born in the development of technology (BIT=Born Into Technology);, and the last generation (BWT=Born With Technology). There is not a time in their life when this group did not have access to some form of technology. Here again, it depends on where you live in the world related to one's access.

Pause for a minute and absorb the information presented above. Overall, it depends on when you were born as to where you fit in society. It may come to you as a surprise that the pandemic has created a brand-new generation. Individuals born during the pandemic do not know a time when we did not have masks or were not isolated from society or were required to take a Coronavirus vaccine. Time is always changing, and new people are always being born.

Generations matter because it is through the lens of time that we see society and relate to it. How has the time in which you were born shaped your values? Think about it in comparison to others in your family who are 10, 20, 30, or 50 years older than you. What is the difference between the way you see things?

BIBLE STORY

The disciple asked Jesus “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” and Jesus sent for a child. Jesus responded, “Verily I say unto you, except you be converted and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Who-

ever humbles themselves as a little child the same is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. The way you treat a small child is an example of the way you treat me.” Jesus continued by saying if someone offends a small child, they also offend Jesus. Jesus instructed those listening not to offend. He explained the severity of offending – “If your eye offends you, pluck it out and cast it away; it’s better to live life with one eye than having two eyes being cast into fire.”

LIFE APPLICATION

Jesus used a child as an example of what the greatest looks like in the kingdom of heaven. Jesus also reminded his followers that they should not offend anyone, nor should they allow any part of themselves to be offensive. There are times when our behavior can be seen as childish, where we act in ways that are offensive to others. We must be careful how we treat others and be curious to ensure that the things we do or say do not cause harm to others.

Take a moment and think about what one quality you believe God values in his followers. Challenge: Be intentional this week to pursue that value in your interactions with others.

SUMMARY

Jesus’ disciples came and asked a simple question, “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” It appears as if they were looking for a specific person or the characteristics of a specific person. We can only imagine what their thoughts were when asking the question; however, Jesus was extremely clear by plac-

ing a child before the crowd. Jesus wanted his followers to know that everyone is great in the kingdom of heaven. The one thing Jesus referenced to the greatness of others was their desire to be converted, changed by the love of God. It is clear that without conversion individuals cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. The other thing is to be humble and to not cause an offense.

What is conversion and why does Jesus mention it in reference to the kingdom of heaven? What are the challenges of being humble and not offending others? Are these actions easy or difficult? Explain.

CLOSING DEVOTION

Thank you, God, for reminding us of the importance of being converted, humble, and without causing offense toward others. As we go through this week, Lord, keep us focused on you and the glory of your kingdom so that we do not stumble as the scripture reminded us in today's lesson. Amen.

ACTIVITY SHEET

There are three columns on next page. You may work alone or in groups; follow the instructions given. Matthew 18:1-5 column, identify the qualities of a child – what does Jesus mean when he says “like a child”?; Matthew 8:6-7 column, identify ways others can trick, block, or cause you to stumble – and keep you or others from trusting Jesus; and Matthew 8:8-9 – draw a line down the middle of the column; on one side identify five things that people do to themselves that causes them to stumble and on the other side identify five things that people do for themselves that strengthen their walk with God.

<p>Matthew 18:1-5</p> <p>Childlike qualities</p>	<p>Matthew 8:6-7</p> <p>Tricks, blocks, or stumbles</p>	<p>Matthew 8:8-9</p> <p>The enemy within</p>

JESUS TALKS WITH A SAMARITAN WOMAN

LESSON SCRIPTURE: JOHN 4:1-42

FOCUS SCRIPTURE: JOHN 4:7-26

Key Verse: *Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I have ever done." John 4:39*

John 4:7-26 (NRSV)

7 A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink."

8 (His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.)

9 The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?" (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.)

10 Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water."

11 The woman said to him, "Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water?"

12 Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?"

13 Jesus said to her, "Every-

one who drinks of this water will be thirsty again,

14 but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life."

15 The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water."

16 Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come back."

17 The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband';

18 for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!"

19 The woman said to him, "Sir, I see that you are a prophet.

20 Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you say that

the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem.”

21 Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem.

22 You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews.

23 But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true wor-

shippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him.

24 God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.”

25 The woman said to him, “I know that Messiah is coming” (who is called Christ). “When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us.”

26 Jesus said to her, “I am he, the one who is speaking to you.”

VOCABULARY

- **Samaria** – A famous city of central Palestine founded by Omri, king of Israel, 30 miles north of Jerusalem and six miles northwest of Shechem.
- **Samaritan** – A person who is a native of Samaria.
- **Prophet** – To tell beforehand; persons who in the Hebrew scripture spoke under divine influence and inspiration.
- **Worship** – To kiss, to adore; do obeisance, show respect, fall or prostrate before.
- **Water Pot** – A bucket or any vessel for drawing water.

INTRODUCTION

Missy spent the summers with her nana. Each year she traveled from her home to visit, and each year she would meet

new people. Missy lived in one area of the country and her nana another. Missy noticed that when she traveled to nana's, things were a little different. She notices that at home they had dinner and with nana they had supper. Missy noticed that at home everyone had water with their meals, but at nana's you had a choice of what you wanted to eat.

The people where nana lived spoke to everyone, while at home they only spoke to people they knew. Moreover, rarely did anyone ask a stranger for help or initiate a conversation. To be sure, things are so different between home and nana's.

Have you ever traveled to an area and noticed that things were a little different from home? If you have never traveled, have you ever watched a TikTok or Reel and wondered why such changes occurred and why they thought that was okay? Have you ever noticed things are different in out of the ordinary places?

BIBLE STORY

A Samaritan woman came to the well to get water and met Jesus who asked her for a drink. The woman was surprised that Jesus was speaking to her because they were of diverse cultural backgrounds; she was a Samaritan and Jesus was a Jew. The two cultures did not engage in conversation, and a Jew would never ask anything of a Samaritan. Jesus responded to the woman that if she only knew him, she would ask for the "living water" of him. The woman and Jesus had a lengthy conversation about the relationship between their cultures and Jesus revealed things to the woman that amazed her.

At the end of the conversation, the woman asked if Jesus was a prophet. She talked about the place of worship for her culture and the place of Jewish worship. Jesus responded that a time was coming when people will worship God in spirit and not in a physical location. The woman was amazed and stated the Messiah was coming and would explain everything. Jesus acknowledged, "I am he."

LIFE APPLICATION

Jesus was intentional to meet the woman and engage in a conversation because she was not a Jew. The story of Jesus and this woman's conversation is a reminder to each of us that we must be intentional to meet people who do not share the same values, beliefs, or history as ourselves. We must go to the place where people gather who are different from us to talk to them about the gospel.

How comfortable are you with meeting a stranger? How often have you met people who were or are different from you? Have you invited them to join you in worship? If not, what prevents you from inviting people to worship?

SUMMARY

The conversation with Jesus and the woman is a memorable conversation. Jesus meets her where she visits on a regular basis. Jesus knew she would be there and would be drawing water. Jesus engages her in a conversation which is shocking to her because she is not a Jew. Jesus shares things about the woman that a stranger would not know. She's amazed by the engagement and Jesus shares with her information about the "living water," worship with God, and her history with her husbands. The woman

is not totally clueless about the Jews as she tells Jesus that the Messiah is coming and when the Messiah comes, they will know better. Jesus let's this woman know that he is the Messiah.

What are some cultural barriers that may make it difficult to share the gospel with individuals? What are some of the things the woman stated when speaking with Jesus she considered a hinderance for the two of them to be in dialogue?

CLOSING DEVOTION

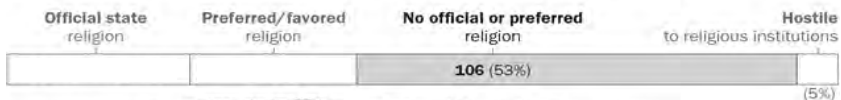
Lord, give us courage to meet strangers and share the gospel with them. Allow us to be courageous to invite someone to worship who may not believe the same things which we believe. Thank you, God, for the lesson of the Samaritan woman who meets Jesus; may she be an example of what it looks like to receive the gospel from a stranger. Amen.

ACTIVITY SHEET

The map on the following page identifies countries which have an “official religion.” Notice only 22% of countries have an “official religion” – official religion does not equal Christianity. Review the map and identify areas on the map where the gospel may not be received.

Most countries have no official or preferred religion

Among the 199 countries analyzed, a breakdown of the state's relationship with religion



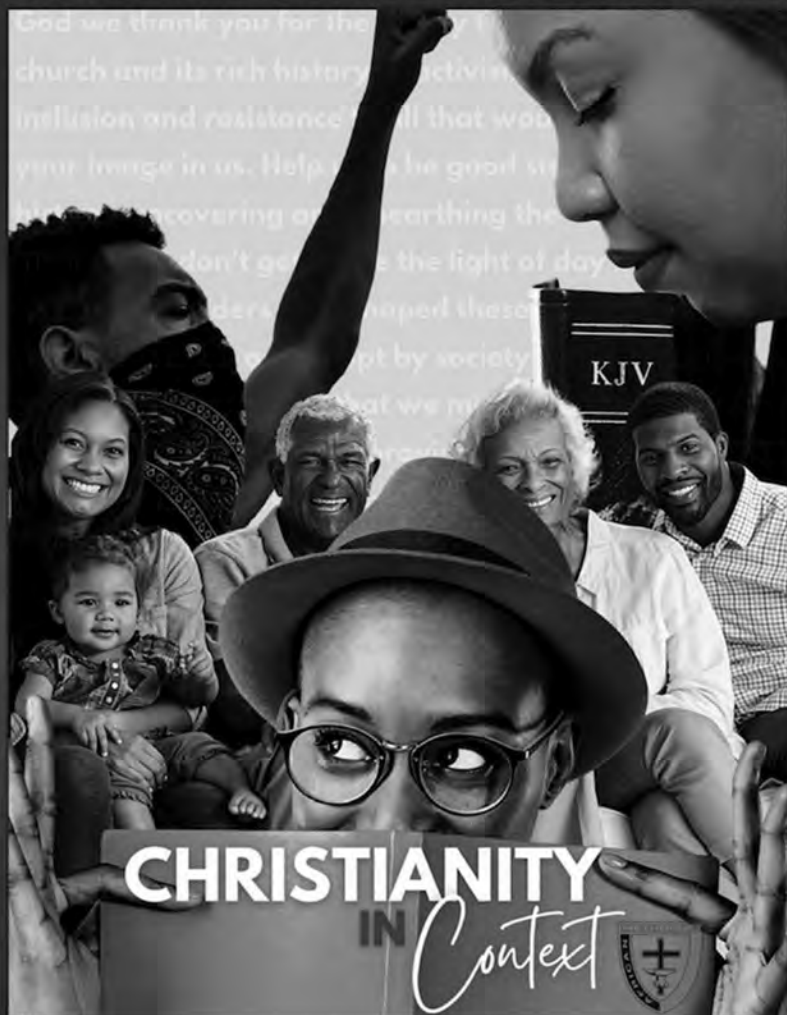
Source: Pew Research Center analysis of external data. See Methodology for details.
 *Many Countries Favor Specific Religions, Officially or Unofficially

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

What causes difficulties in sharing the gospel in these places?
 What could be the response to Christianity in these areas?

What area would you choose that has not received the “gospel”
 = Jesus died for our sins? Please list the area(s).

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