

One Nation Under God - Walk Across America

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Where Have All the Christians Gone?

by Jim Shaner

And the Lord said unto him, Who hath made man's mouth?...have not I the Lord? Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say.

Exodus 4:11-12

Sometime in 2002 just after the commencement of One Nation Under God – Walk Across America, I whispered a simple prayer, “Lord, let me see what You see: let me hear what You hear.” Do I see and hear everything that God does? Absolutely, not! Not even close, but since that time, my spiritual eyesight and hearing has improved significantly. It is not always what we see and hear, but what we do not see and hear. It appears to me although the light of Jesus burns brightly inside our churches, home groups and bible studies; but it sometimes flickers and grows dim on the outside (in the world).

Since October 5, 2002, I have prayer walked 852 miles of the American Discovery Trail and more than 100 miles off trail miles in the town and cities near or along the trail. During this time if it were not for all the churches that I passed along the way, I would be hard pressed to know that the United States of America is a Christian nation. Once during the Christmas season, I spent two hours looking for a Nativity set in a local mall. I found just one. Today if I were to go to that same mall, I am sure I could find a statue of Buddha much easier than an image of Jesus. The following are the times and places in which I heard anyone that was speaking anything related to Christianity. This excludes the people who prayer walked with me or the people that I witnessed to first.

On a Sunday morning at a restaurant in Brunswick, Maryland, I overheard a woman asking the patrons to come to morning service next to the restaurant. She was on fire and filled with the Holy Spirit. Unfortunately Christians like her are few and far between in America. Later the next year near the small town of Cabins, West Virginia, Nadine and I stayed at Smoke Hole Caverns Log Motel. We were invited to attend church by the owner of the motel, Jerry Hedrick. He regularly invites patrons of his motel to church on a Sunday morning. After I answered yes, Jerry drove me to the church in his Cadillac. Jerry not only owns the motel, he also owns the Caverns, a gift shop, a second motel near Seneca Rocks and the Smoke Hole Log Cabin Resort. Then he introduced us to the congregation of Cabins Assembly of God. After the service, we left with Jerry to go back to the motel and ate at their gift shop, West Virginia's Largest/Souvenir Gift Shop. Our meal was “on the house.” Unfortunately Christians like them are few and far between in America. When was the last time you invited a person to church?

The following year we stayed at motel in Clarksburg, West Virginia, birthplace of Stonewall Jackson. Members of the Teen Challenge Training Center from Rehrersburg, Pennsylvania were also staying at the same motel. After I introduced myself, the team encircled me in the parking lot and prayed for my ministry. That night after someone pulled the fire-alarm as a prank, Teen

Challenge members were witnessing to people in the parking lot at 1:30 AM. One man's vision has started America's largest and most successful residential drug and alcohol program. Pastor David Wilkerson left his small town church in Pennsylvania in 1958 to witness in the streets of New York City. From this humble beginning Teen Challenge was created and has now grown to 173 residential and outreach centers in America and 241 centers in 77 other counties. The success rate of individuals involved with Teen Challenge is 86.6%.

The only other time I heard someone witnessing were evangelists, Rick and Jane McKinney, while I was prayer walking with them in Harrisonburg, Virginia. About one minute after meeting them, they led a homeless couple to the Lord. Less than five minutes later, one of the three men sitting on a porch of a house, called to us and asked for prayer. He said that he was down on his luck and had not eaten in four days. He may have not eaten in four days but we knew what he had to drink, alcohol. That did not stop Jane from reaching out and placing her hand on his shoulder and praying for him. Dick made sure that they all received a Bible and a lunch from Wendy's.

At a restaurant in Shawnee, Ohio, I overheard our waitress telling a customer, who was a nurse, that she had leukemia. The nurse responded by telling her about the power of prayer. Then I heard a small still voice inside me. Soon I found myself standing alongside of the waitress and asking, "Would you like me to pray for you?" Before I started to pray, the owner of the restaurant and Nadine stood beside of me. Too often we, Christians, pray for people in church or in a hospital and nowhere else. Jesus can hear our prayers from the deepest coal-mine to the highest mountaintop. During the last twenty years, only one person witnessed to me. While in a public place, she asked me, a stranger, if I knew that I would go to heaven. She happened to be from a Baptist church from my home town of Downingtown. When was the last time you witnessed or prayed with someone in a public place? Since 2002 during my travels, I have seen only one family give a blessing for their food in a restaurant. Do you stop and give thanks to the Lord before you eat a meal in a public place?

In America there are mainly four places where people gather to fellowship; churches, restaurants, taverns and the favorite place for the youth, the local malls. While most malls are open seven days a week for about twelve hours a day, most restaurants are open seven days a week for about 15 hours a day. Taverns are open six days or seven days a week until the early morning hours. Most churches in America are open less than twelve hours a week. There was once a time in American history where the church was the local meeting place for community events and for fellowship. This April when I prayer walk in Adams County, Ohio, I will pass white churches with tall steeples with their doors locked and the parking lots empty and I will asked myself one question, "Where have all the Christians gone?"

News along the American Discovery Trail

Last year Debbie Schachner finished her walk of faith across American to raise money to have a library built in Timau, Kenya. She is presently in Kenya seeing her vision fulfilled. The library is now being built. Praise God.

On April 6, Jane March and another friend (the Golden Girls) will began their journey across America on horseback from Cape Henlopen. Wish them Godspeed.

To learn more about the One Nation Under God –Walk Across America, go to our web site, www.walkacrossamerica.info.

**God bless,
Jim Shaner
jims19372@yahoo.com**

**One Nation Under God –Walk Across America
P.O. Box 72692
Thorndale, PA 19372-0692**

**Total miles walked of the American Discovery Trail - 852 miles
Number of prayer walkers - 64 prayer walkers
Number of people praying for America - 56,884 prayer warriors**