

## 94.5 The Bible Belt

Florida is an exceptional place for me. I spent most of my formative years there and converted to Christ in the northeast part of the state when I was nineteen. A Christian high school friend taught me the gospel, and I “*put Christ on in baptism*” (Galatians 3:27) on August 15, 1973. I don’t think we would say that Florida is the “Bible Belt” of America. It is more of a mission field, especially with so many coming from all over the country to experience liberty there.

I tease my Floridian Christian friends and tell them their goal should be to change the spelling of the state motto from, “*Sunshine State,*” to “*S-O-N-shine State.*” A group of pastors in Titusville seem to have a similar goal. They pray together regularly for each other, their churches, and their community so that “*it will be difficult for anyone there not to go to heaven.*”

Shortly after my conversion, I felt a little like the prophet in **Isaiah 6** when he encountered the presence of God in his vision and volunteered to go for Him. I didn’t have a vision or some dramatic call to preach, but I felt compelled to volunteer to go into ministry. I transferred to a Christian college to learn the Bible and how to preach. My goal was to live and work outside the perceived “Bible Belt” of Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, and Alabama.

I wanted to introduce people who were like me to the gospel, as my friend had done. I needed to be better equipped for the task, and wound up in the *Bible Belt*, for most of my career. I discovered that people are the same all over. People in the “*Bible Belt*” generally did not know the Bible well and had as many distractions in their walk with Christ as those outside this area of the country. They attended worship services, but God did not often influence their lives overall.

The “Bible Belt” has changed locations over time. At one point in American history, the “Bible Belt” was in New England, with Massachusetts as the “Buckle.” The Pilgrims came to America in 1620 to serve the Lord as missionary families and establish a religious colony, which became a state. The Christians there instituted Harvard, the first continuing college with the motto, “*Truth for Christ and the Church.*” The New England citizens established other then-Christian schools, such as Yale. The “Ivy League” is anything but Christian today. Harvard’s motto has changed to “*Truth,*” although the original motto stands outside on the Harvard Yard Gate. None of these originally Christian schools challenge their students to know Christ and His word, embracing atheism instead.

The “Bible Belt” shifted. Sometime during the “*Second Great Awakening*” and after the Civil War, the focal point of American Christianity was the South. The hardships of the War, along with those of Reconstruction, caused Southerners to seek the Lord as never before, and Bible literacy flourished. The thorns and weeds of our prosperity make it difficult for the word of God to thrive anywhere in the USA. We are distracted by our screens and games and view Bible study as a chore rather than a delight. Too many of us have forgotten or do not believe **Psalm 1:1-2** (NKJV), which reads:

**Blessed is the man  
Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly,  
Nor stands in the path of sinners,  
Nor sits in the seat of the scornful;  
<sup>2</sup> But his delight is in the law of the LORD,  
And in His law he meditates day and night.**

**Asbury University** sparked a revival among some Americans. It appears that the current college-age students are open to the leading of God and may be leading the rest of us closer to Him. Other US colleges and universities have had similar spiritual outbreaks. For instance, students at the **University of Oklahoma**

plan a day to fill OU's football stadium for Jesus on April 29, 2023 (see <http://fillthestadiumou.com/>). Other God eruptions have occurred worldwide in countries like Nicaragua, Peru, and Africa.

There is no "Bible Belt" in America today for all practical purposes. We may be at the lowest spiritual point in American history, and God may be using the spiritual awakenings of college students to get our attention. Too many Americans have put their Bibles away and deferred allegiance to God to the gods of personal pleasure and success. God says we will find Him when we search wholeheartedly for Him (**Jeremiah 29:13**).

I hope you are among the people who will say, "*That does not describe me. I am seeking the Lord with all my heart.*" If you are, you have volunteered with Isaiah to go for God into your community with His message of reconciliation and freedom. You are light and salt to a dark and perishing world. So, wear God's "Bible Belt" among those with whom you come in contact. **Ephesians 6:14** (ESV) reads:

**Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness,**

Let's Keep The Light of God's "*Bible Belt*" Burning!

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