

OPERATION **ONESIMUS** – 2018 ADVANCE WORK

Introduction

It's great that you're planning to be at Onesimus Training this year. You've probably either been before, you've heard about it from someone you know, or you've read about the program. In any case, you probably know that Onesimus is a rewarding experience in which past participants have established relationships that they've enjoyed ever since. There's more to it.

Onesimus is hard work.

Onesimus is hard work because living a truly spiritual life is even harder work. If you've read the gospels and know about Jesus' life, then you know something about the difficulty. And you know something about the wonderful, unmatched results of Jesus' life. In a similar vein, Onesimus would be neither a durable nor memorable experience if it were easy.

The start of Onesimus Training is the collection of assignments on the next few pages. The purpose of the assignments is to challenge you. To stretch you. You may already be going to school, working a job or both. Your first challenge may be reserving the time needed to do these assignments well.

Upon your arrival at training you'll be asked to demonstrate that you've done these assignments. If you've not done them, you may be asked to excuse yourself from all non-class activities until you complete the work.

Evidence of a prepared assignment will vary depending on your style of preparation. Written notes or outlines are great. If that's not your style, be prepared to give a detailed verbal account. Consider submitting your evidence beforehand, either by email, post, phone call, Facebook message, etc. Also, if you prepare something in advance, but then decide at training to prepare something different, that's completely fine. You don't have to present the material you submitted, just speak to the superintendent on site to discuss your change in topic.

We're determined that all assignments will be used explicitly during training. We will eliminate "make-work" assignments that you never hear about again. To sum this up: we'll respect your effort, you respect ours.

There are three specific assignments outlined here for which you will need to show evidence of your preparation:

Part One: First Week Presentation, assigned topic

Part Two: Second Week Presentation, your choice of topic

Part Three: Assignments from your teachers, in preparation for their classes

The primary goal of these assignments is to strengthen your familiarity and accuracy with the Bible. The secondary goal is to improve your skill at articulating what you learn from Scripture. We're trying to make you "fluent" in Scripture. To assess your own progress with the assignments, continually measure your familiarity with your points. Get others to help you assess your accuracy and the clarity of your explanations.

Everyone involved in Onesimus wants to see you succeed. The teachers, the other students, the support team, the staff—all are going to support you, encourage you and celebrate seeing you meet challenges and grow.

We expect you will have questions and concerns about this work. You will have plenty of time to work with us and the other teachers and superintendents during training, but feel free to reach out to us beforehand as well.

Please read through this document carefully. **Your first action item that requires an immediate response is under the Service Sessions heading below.**

God be with you in your work!

Love in Jesus,

The OO Committee (Chris & Jen Wubbels, Levi & Jessica Gelineau, Maggie Schlageter, James & Becky Ross, Matt Drabenstott, Jacob & Josie Walker)

Service Sessions

During the afternoons, you will have several hours set aside to participate in service sessions: small work groups intended to help you hone a specific talent that you can put to use in your ecclesia and in the worldwide body of Christ hopefully for the rest of your lives. **Please prayerfully consider the following areas of service and determine the top two you feel you would be the most effective in.**

Once you have thought about the options below, please email Sis. Maggie Schlageter (maggieschlageter@gmail.com) with your top two choices by May 13th at the latest.

Branding and Marketing

- Design flyers and social media pages to be used for inreach and outreach purposes
- Find ways to use your talents for design and innovation within the ecclesia

Art

- Learn new ways to use art as an act of service
- Create artistic work that will directly benefit outreach projects

Hospitality

- Show practical hospitality (refreshments, gifts, acts of kindness) to participants and supporters of the Onesimus program
- Understand the importance of hospitality in building relationships within the ecclesia.
- Plan ways to increase hospitality in your home life and home ecclesia.

Writing

- Examine the role of the written word in the spread of the gospel throughout history
- Work as a group to create a journalistic platform that will strengthen and spread your faith

Community Outreach

- Learn to work as a team while planning events
- Work to support existing community outreach activities
- Gain skills that will help you feel comfortable planning preaching activities for your home ecclesia

On Fridays, everyone will take a break from their regular service sessions and work together on camp projects during service session time. (Do not include Camp Projects/Physical Labor as one of your two choices, since everyone will participate.)

Camp Projects - Physical Labor Fridays

- Serve your brothers and sisters by helping out around the camp
- Projects may include painting, yard maintenance, etc.

- Learn new ways of using physical acts of service to help others

First Week Presentations

For the first week presentations, each student is assigned a chapter or several chapters. In 5 - 10 minutes, you will provide an overview, an explanation of the chapter(s)'s main points, and how the content fits into its book. **When you email Maggie your service session choices, she will email you back with your presentation chapter assignment.**

Deuteronomy (1-34)

A few additional notes on first week presentations:

The book of Deuteronomy contains some “challenging” chapters, as Moses recounts the entirety of the law to the people of Israel. If you feel that the approach described above does not lend itself to the chapter you have been assigned, that’s okay; don’t feel that you must summarize or cover the entire content of your assigned chapter. Instead, consider taking one of the following approaches:

- Choose a character mentioned in your chapter to do a scripturally-grounded character study on. Make connections between the actions or attributes of this person to those of other scriptural characters, principles, or other references in the Bible to the same character. You will probably want to have access to a Bible Dictionary to help you dig deeper (there are plenty of these online if you cannot find one in your ecclesial library).
- Choose one particular law or statement and follow it through the entire Bible. What are its implications? Do we see examples of Israelites throughout the Biblical narrative keeping or not keeping this law? Does it speak to any of Jesus’ actions or events in the New Testament?

Second Week Presentations

The goal of the second week’s presentations is to give you the opportunity to share personal Bible study that you have found to be interesting, encouraging, or helpful.

Your presentation should show a command of scripture, with a complex structure and sophistication. Develop a body of relevant passages from the Bible, and use that as your basis. From there, organize your thoughts into a 5-10 minute presentation. Be sure to link your main points to specific Bible passages. Make the connections clear, and ensure your application is consistent with each passage’s context and intent.

During the first week of Onesimus, a superintendent/committee member will want to hear a brief summary of what you plan to present about. You can also reach out to superintendents or committee members at any time during the first week to run through thoughts and work through any aspects of your presentation you’d like to get other perspectives on!

Assignments from Teachers

Week One: Classes by Bros. Matthew Harrison and Aaron Johnson

- **Brother Matt’s class is entitled “Barriers to Faith”.**

Class Introduction: *During this class, we're going to examine barriers to faith. What keeps us and others from "the way, the truth, and the light" (John 14:6)? How do we reconcile Genesis with science? Or a loving God with the Holocaust? Can our ecclesia – in all its myriad aspects – also be a barrier to faith, both to those within and without? And what does our faith look like to others – to those who might be seeking the*

word of God? Are we, as a community, a welcoming beacon of light or are we a signal that flashes caution?

In preparation for Bro. Matt's class, please complete the following two assignments.

1. Ecclesial Questionnaire. In the lead up to Onesimus, you are to make observations (take notes!) regarding your ecclesia. Carefully consider and answer the following. Be prepared to share your notes with the group. This is going to help us analyze the inner workings of our ecclesias. There is no one right or wrong answer, no perfect ecclesia!

- What kind of space is meeting held in?
- How would you characterize the space?
- How many people (total) regularly attend?
- How many children (12 and under)?
- How many teens (13+)?
- How many adults (18+)?
- How many seniors (65+, you can estimate their age if you don't know)?
- Does most of the ecclesia belong to one family?
- Is it racially diverse?
- Is it linguistically diverse (different languages spoken), and if so, how is it accommodated (or is it)?
- Do people come from different socio-economic backgrounds (not well-off to rich)?
- How are old, sick, or the physically challenged accommodated (or are they)?
- What is the order of events in the service?
- What translation of the Bible is generally read from (i.e. King James, NIV) or is there no one translation typically used?
- Are readings read in the lead up to the exhortation?
- Who or how are readings chosen (presider, exhorter, or taken from a reading schedule)?
- Are the readings applicable (i.e. Related to the talk or some other point, or done because it was that day's readings; are genealogical lists read or skipped over; what is the level of engagement while the readings are read — are people following along, taking notes, or stalling off into space, etc.)?
- What general themes are exhorted upon?
- Do exhorters tend to use audio/visual aids (projectors, laptops, etc.)?
- Do exhorters typically engage with the audience (ask them to read, show of hands, etc. If so, are women included?)
- Does the exhorter sit or stand?
- Is there a podium?
- How long is an exhortation (roughly)?
- What are the presider's duties (do all presiders follow the same pattern or is it varied)?
- How is the bread and wine distributed?
- Are the bread and wine covered by a cloth or something else; what type of receptacle is used for the bread and wine (fancy wine glass, something simple, etc.)?
- Does the presider quote from the same passages prior to distributing the bread and wine?
- Is music played during the memorials (as background music, for example)?
- How many hymns are sung?
- What type of musical instrument is used?
- Where are the hymns (songs) typically chosen from (green book, some other song book)?
- Is there typically any relationship between the song sung and the exhortation?
- When people sing, what is their enthusiasm like?
- Do people stand or sit during hymns and prayers?
- What is the seating arrangement like (rows/pews, circle, around a table, square, etc.)?
- Do women wear head coverings?
- Do men wear hats?
- Are children in the main hall where the exhortation is presented?
- If children are present, what is the general level of disturbance that occurs (are they noisy, quiet, are parents frequently getting up and down with their children, are people turning their heads around when there are noises, etc.)?
- During the exhortation, what is (generally) the engagement of the audience like (are they attentive, do they look up passages, do they take notes, do they fidget, stare into space, etc.)?

- Is a collection taken and if so, how and at what point in the service?
- Is a meal (typically) eaten afterwards; if on occasion, how frequently?
- How many prayers are given?
- Is there frequently repetition in the prayers over the course of a single meeting (do you hear the same phrases, ideas, sentiments being expressed)?
- Roughly (do not time them) how long are prayers, do they vary in length or are they generally short or long?
- Do brothers take requests for prayers (asks the congregation who might be sick, who might need mentioning, etc.) before one is given?
- What is the general attire of the meeting (formal, casual, a mix)?
- Are there rules regarding attire?
- What happens before service begins?
- What happens after service ends AND are the conversations (that you hear) afterwards generally related to the exhortation or not?
- Does the meeting start and end, roughly, at certain times?
- Are people generally punctual?
- Is there anything said before the presider begins memorial service (does he make an announcement about who can or cannot partake, or that the meeting meets on the basis of such and such document or does he 'welcome' a select group of people)?
- How are guests generally treated (or are there typically none) — are they welcomed privately before service, or at the podium by the presider, etc.
- What are the roles of women?
- How are young people (presumably male brothers) incorporated into the service (or are they?)
- Does your ecclesia have a board — if so, what kinds of activities (that you're aware of) are they involved in making decisions about?
- What is the demographic makeup (roughly) of your board (young/old, men/women & how many)?
- Is there anything unique that your ecclesia does?

Finally: Based on what you've now observed:

- Would you say people enjoy coming?
- What Bible verse would best characterize your ecclesia?
- What changes, if any, would you make if you could? Why?
- Do you feel like you have a place in your ecclesia?

2. Write about the following: In your own life, your own experiences, your own conversations with others — what are some of the barriers to faith that are frequently mentioned? Why do you think these are barriers?

- **Brother Aaron's class is entitled "The Spaces Between".**

Class introduction: *I'm not a bible scholar by any means. I'm not the biggest reader, although that has changed in the last few years. I'm not the most proficient writer unless you need a catchy headline. Despite all that, I might be one of the more inquisitive people you'll meet. Some would say I am highly inappropriate too! That's because my brain is interested in the "why" of everything. And sometimes the "why" is really uncomfortable for people to answer. But I don't care because we don't have forever to figure this out.*

It's easy to read these Bible stories and only absorb the written words. To glean all we can from the letters and what they say. These words and letters are the surface of each story and of course, most of the information is right there for us to pick up. But what is underneath? What about the space in-between the letters? What about the empty or negative spaces that don't actually seem to say anything? Is there more story there? If we ask the question "why" are there more lessons to be found? Can asking this question bring these people to life and help us understand our own?

In preparation for Bro. Aaron's class, please complete the following three assignments. While doing this homework, pretend that you are a detective and put yourself in these peoples' shoes to better understand their motivation. You'll have to ask the questions who, what, where, when, why, and how. What answers can you fill in by imagining the world they lived in? By imagining the life they have lived to the point we are introduced to their story?

Assignment 1

Luke 18: 35-43

Verse 43 ends with “and followed Jesus.”

So what? Who cares? Why waste my time with that bit of information? We could have stopped at “he received his sight”. Is there anything that this little extra bit of easily skipped over text can tell us about him? What was his life like before he met Jesus? Is there another lesson in here besides the surface takeaway of, “Jesus having the ultimate power to heal people”? Put yourself in his shoes and tell me why it matters that he “followed Jesus”.

Assignment 2

Luke 22:39-46

Why was Jesus scared in the garden? This isn't an easy or comfortable question to ask.

Why is the son of God, the same thirty-three-year-old man who just told his disciples he would die and rise again on the third day, so scared he's sweating blood? If he's certain he'll be raised from the dead, what's he so fearful of? Aren't we told that perfect love casts out fear? Does this mean that Jesus is lacking in faith?

Assignment 3

I am going to give you less guidance on this one. Luke and John tell us something was left in Jesus' tomb. So what? Who cares? What was it? Why does it even matter?

Week Two: Classes by Bros. Stephen Johnson and Shawn Moynihan

- **Brother Steve's class is titled “Apologetics: There's Nothing to Apologize About”.**

Class Introduction: *“For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised. If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all men most to be pitied.”*

The foundation of Christianity is the resurrection of Jesus. But how can we know whether or not it really happened?

Christian apologetics is a branch of Christian theology that aims to present historical, reasoned, and evidential bases for Christianity, defending it against objections.

Is it reasonable to believe that Jesus was raised from the dead? Apologetics is about making a case that it is. It's something that anyone who is a believer should know about.

In preparation for Brother Steve's class, please respond to the following two questions via email prior to the beginning of the OO program. Here is your message from Steve:

Part One

C.S. Lewis was, among many accomplishments, the author of The Chronicles of Narnia. (I hope you've read The Lion, The Witch and The Wardrobe by this point in your life!) Lewis was born into a Christian home in Ireland but fell away from his faith while he was an adolescent. Around the age of 32, largely due to the influence of one of his friends, J.R.R. Tolkien, (you know, the author of The Hobbit and Lord of the Rings...you've read those by now, right?) Lewis once again developed a strong Christian faith. He wrote this: “One must keep on pointing out that Christianity is a statement which, if false, is of no importance and if true, of infinite importance. The one thing it cannot be is moderately important.”

What does he mean? (Write me an email with your thoughts. Doesn't have to be long, just thoughtful. stephenjohnson@frontier.com)

Part Two

Give some thought to this: Do you believe that Jesus of Nazareth was put into a tomb stone cold dead and then came back to life a few days later? If your answer is “Yes!” why do you believe this? If you asked a friend if they think Jesus is alive or dead and they said “Probably dead,” what would you say to them?

Maybe you aren't sure about the resurrection of Jesus. What are your questions that would need answering in order to believe it happened?

Once again, write me an email with your thoughts either way. Stephenjohnson@frontier.com.

So you can write me one email including your thoughts on Part One and Part Two or two emails, one for each part. I'm looking forward to spending time in July thinking about these issues with you. Hope your spring and summer are great! With love in Jesus, Steve

- **Brother Shawn's class will center on the idea "Lord, teach us to pray" (Luke 11:1).**

God willing, these classes will focus on Jesus' teaching about prayer and his practice of prayer. We will look at the model prayers that Jesus shared, his specific teaching about prayer, and how he applied the principles of prayer in his own life. We will also explore Jesus' role in our own prayer life and how thankfulness was embodied in every aspect of Jesus' life.

In preparation for Brother Shawn's class, please complete the five assignments below.

Assignment 1: Making the Lord's Prayer Your Own

Jesus gave two examples of how we might pray. To better understand Jesus' teaching, we are going to personalize these prayers through the following steps:

- Read Matt. 6:9-13 and Luke 11:1-4
- Choose either Matt. or Luke and re-write the prayer using synonyms that are personally meaningful.
- You will have the opportunity to share your prayers in class if you choose to do so

Assignment 2: Prayer Parable

Jesus taught several stories about prayer, the most well-known of which is the Pharisee and Publican (Luke 18:9-14).

- Create a brief story, set in 21st century North America, that illustrates one of Jesus' teachings about prayer.
- You will have the opportunity to share your story in class if you choose to do so.

Assignment 3: Barriers to Prayer

In one paragraph, compare and contrast two incidents of your prayer life. First, a time when emotionally connected prayer seemed to come easily to you; second, a time when it was very difficult for you to pray.

Assignment 4: Jesus, Our Advocate

List ten things that you think Jesus says about you to the Father.

Assignment 5: Thankfulness Journal

For the month of June, you will keep a brief journal. Each day, you will list three things for which you are thankful. Each entry can be as simple—or as complex—as you feel appropriate. There is nothing too "small" for which to be thankful.