

THIS IS ONEIDA LOVE THEM TO JESUS

Oneida Baptist Church sits at the foot of the OBI campus, and our ministry and the ministry of Oneida Baptist Church have had close ties down through the years. This local church recently hired one of our houseparents as pastor. This new pastor and OBI staff member already had close ties with the students of OBI, and has already been making such an impact on our young people.

One of the very first things our new pastor did was start a Sunday night voluntary worship service for our students. This service follows the adult worship service, and is oftentimes student-led. On a typical night 25-50 will attend, but on a recent night in which pizza was involved, there were 180 in attendance. Food in our dormitories in the evening hours is at a real premium, so if you feed them, they will come. Once we get them there, we will then love them to Jesus.

At one of these recent services, there was a great crowd that included many regular church attenders and also many OBI students and staff. Before the service began, one of our young men approached me and apologized for a recent mistake. Had he not apologized, I would have known nothing of the issue, and I was impressed by this unforced gesture of maturity. After an opening hymn, our new pastor baptized four of our students who had given their hearts to Christ. One of our students then preached and brought a fine message on the family of God and God's love. The Lord's Supper followed the message. I was blessed to see these new Christians participate. It was a great night of worship, fellowship, and encouragement.

One of the biggest challenges we face today with our young people is apathy. It is difficult to make someone care about something if they don't already. If a young person doesn't want to do well in school, keep a clean dorm room, get along with peers, or simply behave, it is oftentimes a real challenge to help him or her overcome and improve.

That recent Sunday night service I have described was a reminder for me that young people do care, and when they find hope in Jesus Christ their lives can and will change for the better. As a school or church we oftentimes are averse to trying new things or ideas. People don't just come to church today because the doors of the church are open. We must figure out new ways to draw them in, and then love them to Jesus. In our 116-year history, we have done many different things to draw young people to our campus, and we will continue to do so because it enables us to fulfill the Great Commission.

Thank you for helping us love our kids to Jesus.



**Larry A. Gritton, Jr.
OBI President**

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