

**THIS IS ONEIDA
SIMPLE DECISIONS, LONG-LASTING RESULTS**

I began my love affair with the game of baseball in 1982. Although basketball has always been my first love, I have always considered baseball a close second. Perhaps the games my dad took me to made it so special to me. One of the few television stations we had in my home was WTBS. The Atlanta Braves were on WTBS almost every night from April through September. Although most Kentucky boys followed the Cincinnati Reds, I quickly fell in love with the Atlanta Braves.

I have continued this baseball love affair well into my adult life, and now enjoy taking my own kids to games. My last five years in Florida, I developed a great friendship with a great high school baseball coach named Jeff Kieffer. As the 2011 major league baseball season was winding down, Jeff and I decided that if the Tampa Bay Rays were in contention for a playoff spot on the last day of the season we would drive to Tampa for their game vs. the New York Yankees. On Wednesday, September 28, 2011 Jeff and I sat at the Rays and Yankees game. After seven innings of play, the Rays trailed the Yankees by a score of 7-0. It was a school night and we were two hours from home, so at my request Jeff and I left for home.

Although only a trivial thing in life, I have always regretted that decision to leave Tampa early that night. I had attended baseball games all my life hoping to see some baseball magic and history. Baseball magic and history happened that night and I was there. Well, at least I was there through seven innings. Jeff and I were home and in front of the television by the time the Red Sox lost their game and the Rays won their game on a dramatic walk-off home run to make the playoffs. I told my friend Jeff I wanted to cry, but I'm pretty sure he did cry. Jeff loved baseball more than anyone I've ever known. I felt bad for myself for missing out on what some called the greatest night of regular season baseball in history, but I felt even worse for my friend Jeff.

Many of our students here at OBI have made decisions that have caused them pain, but many of our young people have had a tough road to travel due to simple decisions other folks in their lives have made. As each MLB baseball season winds down, I will be reminded of my decision to leave that game that night and will probably always regret it. As the days pass here at Oneida, many of our students remember past decisions and hurts, but praise the Lord they now have the opportunity to make simple decisions that can redirect their lives in God's kingdom. Watching our young people change their lives one decision at a time through God's grace will always mean more to me than any baseball game ever could. I am thankful for Kentucky Baptists and other extended OBI friends who help make it possible for our young people to be in a place where simple decisions with long-lasting results can be made one day at a time.



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

*First printed in the Western Recorder September 24, 2013.
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