



Near and Now

When My Calling is Behind the Scenes – Onesiphorus

By Vicar Paige McGrath

Warm-up Question

*When have you felt weighed down? Describe how people responded to your burden(s).
How did their response make you feel?*

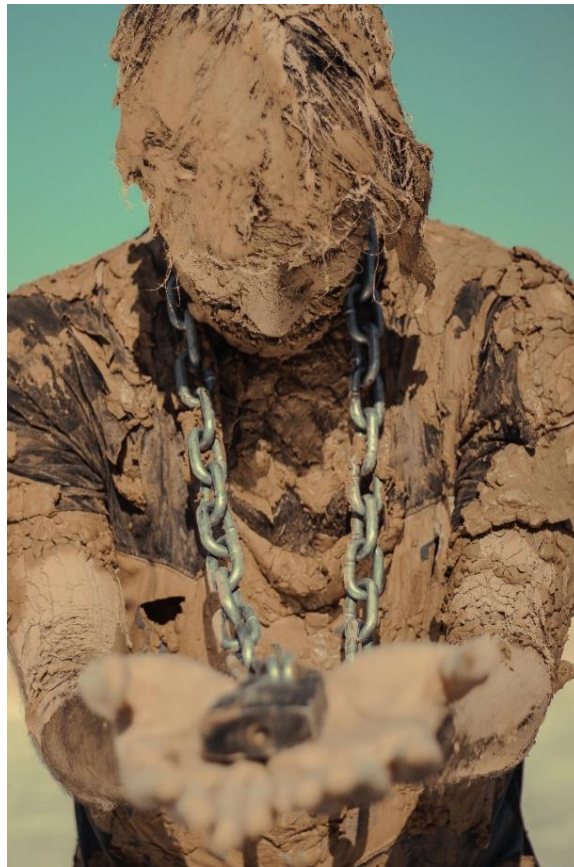


Photo by Mahdi Bafande on [Unsplash](#)

Discussion Questions

1. What do you see in this image?
2. What do you feel looking at this image?
3. What stories from your own life does this image bring to mind?
4. What stories of the world does this image bring to mind?

He Often Refreshed Me and Was Not Ashamed of My Chains

Read [2 Timothy 1:16-18](#)

Bible Story Reflection

We do not know a lot about Onesiphorus, but what we do know is that 2 Timothy is likely written by the apostle, Paul, to a young leader in the faith, Timothy. Much of this letter is instructional and encouraging. Paul is trying to help Timothy learn from his own experiences and get him connected to other believers, including Onesiphorus. The fact that Paul names Onesiphorus (twice! – in this passage and again in chapter 4) suggests that Onesiphorus is not only trustworthy and helpful, but that Onesiphorus is a model of faithful living.

Onesiphorus is a great example of someone who is called to hospitality. Paul does not use this word, but he writes about Onesiphorus refreshing him, seeking him out (likely when he was imprisoned in Rome), and not being ashamed of his chains. Persecution for proclaiming Christ crucified was a very present risk that Onesiphorus likely took on when he sought out Paul and helped him in his time of need. That friendship and loyalty appears to be more meaningful to Paul than any physical needs Onesiphorus may have provided, such as food or shelter.

Onesiphorus was not ashamed of Paul's chains; he was not ashamed that this leader was imprisoned and punished for his faith. Onesiphorus shared Paul's burden and carried his cross with him. Paul and Timothy obviously get more of the spotlight today as early leaders of the Church, but Onesiphorus' behind-the-scenes role was vital to both Paul and Timothy's success. Onesiphorus was Paul's helping hand and Timothy's example of faithful friendship and loving hospitality.

May Onesiphorus be your example, too, especially if your call is behind the scenes. May you seek out those in need. Go to them. Visit the imprisoned. Welcome visitors into your home or church, just as they are; do not add to their shame or trauma. Instead, share the weight of their burdens with them. If your call is behind the scenes, perhaps you are simply called to be a loving friend to all who cross your path; perhaps you are called to be like Onesiphorus.

Discussion Questions

1. Describe a time when you were ashamed and were met with grace and friendship.
2. In what ways do you relate to Onesiphorus?
3. Who are the Onesiphoruses in your life? Who has been a strong example of hospitality for you?
4. How do you think Onesiphorus would talk about his role in Paul and Timothy's ministry?
5. Do you think Timothy followed up with Onesiphorus? What do you think that encounter was like for Timothy? Onesiphorus?
6. If Onesiphorus lived in today's world, for what career do you think his gifts would be well-suited?
7. What is your experience with imprisoned people, if any?
8. How do you feel called to Christian friendship and/or hospitality? In your home? In your church?

Activity Suggestions

Write a letter to Paul or Timothy from Onesiphorus' perspective. Consider how the experience of supporting their ministries with hospitality and friendship would have impacted Onesiphorus.

Journal about something for which you feel ashamed or burdened. If you have a trusted friend or minister, practice sharing those difficult feelings with them.

Make a list of 5 people who have provided a safe place for you to share your shame and burdens. Recognize those people in a way that feels appropriate: share your praise of them with the group, write them a thank you letter, call them to share your appreciation, recommend them as a resource for others, etc.

Prayer Concerns

Those who are imprisoned, caregivers, and those who provide hospitality, especially as their vocation (in restaurants, hotels, travel, etc.)

Closing Prayer

Fill me with your grace, O God, so that I can meet people where they are and lift up those who are weighed down. In the name of +Jesus, Amen.

