Unsung Heroes: Week 1 — "Encouragement of Barnabas"

CONNECT: What's one of the best compliments you've ever received? It could be either meaningful or just funny!

GROW:
1. Who is a "Barnabas" in your life? Who consistently encourages you and pulls you up when you feel like the world is trying to push you down?
2. **Read Acts 9:27, MSG.** Has there ever been a time when you felt like everyone had given up on you, but one person showed up and made you feel seen, loved, and believed in? Has that impacted the way you treat other people in similar situations?
3. **Read 1 Thessalonians 5:11 and Matthew 5:46-47.**
   a. Does encouragement come naturally to you? Why or why not?
   b. Who do you sometimes forget to encourage?
   c. Do you ever find yourself thinking that certain people don't deserve any more patience or encouragement? In general, what kinds of personalities or behaviors cause you to put your guard up and make it difficult for you to extend grace?
   d. Who is someone in your life right now that you're struggling to keep believing in? (Use discretion in identifying them.)
   e. How do we manage the struggle between enabling someone's unhealthy behavior and not giving up on them?
4. Is there an area of your life where you feel particularly discouraged right now? What do you *feel*, vs. what do you *know*? I.e., What truth can you use to combat the way you feel?

PRAY: Based on what was shared in question #4, pray for God to help us replace our feelings with the truth. Pray for Him to lead us in encouraging and building others up, even and especially those we find most difficult to love.

NEXT: Identify a habit you could develop to consistently lift others up. Think and pray about your natural gifts/skills and the contexts in which you often find yourself. (E.g., baking something every week for the local fire department, writing encouraging notes to the baristas at your favorite coffee shop, saying one encouraging thing every day to the coworker you struggle with, etc.