

Encouragement—1 Thessalonians 5:11

WWT Board of Directors Devotion

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Let's begin with a question. Who is the most encouraging person you know? Take a moment to think about why that person came to mind. The people you have visualized have certainly made a difference in your life. That is why you remember them. During times of doubt, uncertainty, or plain old fatigue, you can remember how that person's words and actions made a profound difference in your life.

The fourth chapter of Acts introduces a man named Joseph, who was given the nickname "Barnabas" by early church leaders. Barnabas means "son of encouragement."

The first thing Barnabas does for the early church is one of radical generosity. He sold land and gave the proceeds to the church to support its ability to care for all! Generosity is a hallmark of encouragement, but it is not limited to monetary support, it means being generous with your time, energy, and influence.

The book of Acts goes on to explain that Barnabas was responsible for introducing Paul to the early church leaders. He vouched for Paul's character and ministry, even though Paul had previously been a persecutor of the early church. Paul goes on to be the first documented Christian missionary and is joined by his encouraging wingman, Barnabas. One of the highest forms of encouragement is to vouch for, and stand beside another, especially when that person is disrespected or misunderstood.

Perhaps a seldom noted, but critical element of encouragement, is forgiveness. While agreeing with and supporting someone definitely feels encouraging, there will be moments of disagreement or disappointment in any relationship. Barnabas and Paul were no different. However, their disagreements did not derail their overall relationship. They were able to extend the encouragement of forgiveness to one another. How encouraging is it when someone is willing to forgive you?

Paul writes in 1 Thessalonians 5:11, "Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing."

Please join me in prayer:

Heavenly Father, thank you for demonstrating true encouragement by your radical generosity, by standing with us, and by forgiving us. As a reflection of your love, please help us to become a Barnabas for others. I pray this with humble respect for all faiths and backgrounds, in the name of Jesus. AMEN