

Please note: There will be no LG Vimeo this week or next week. We encourage you to spend the time at the beginning of Life Group to discuss how your group members can engage their neighbors through the GLOW Made for More project.

BIG IDEA

Genuine friendship is a bridge that can carry the weight of truth.

WHAT DOES GOD WANT ME TO KNOW?

What is your favorite book or movie about friendship? What do you like most about it?

Read Philemon 1:1-7. What elements of genuine friendship can you identify within this passage?

When addressing Philemon, Paul exhibits much **gratitude**. He references their **partnership** in kingdom work and the desire for “**deepening understanding**” and it is clear that Paul regularly prays for Philemon. Paul states that Philemon’s **love** has given him great **joy, encouragement** and **refreshment**.

What conclusions can you draw about Paul and Philemon’s relationship from these verses?

Paul and Philemon have developed a genuine friendship through their partnership in laboring for the kingdom. There is a deep love and respect between both of them. Paul thinks very highly of Philemon and they seem to have a rich history.

Why might Paul start out his letter to Philemon this way? Support your answer.

The request that Paul will make to Philemon in this letter is huge (receive Onesimus, a runaway slave, with open arms and elevate him to the status of brother- AKA free him!). It is possible that he wants Philemon to understand how much faith he has in him to do the right thing in this challenging situation. It may be simpler, though. Perhaps Paul’s genuine care for Philemon would have compelled him to start the letter this way regardless of the content (consider, for example, Romans 1:8).

What can we learn about kingdom friendships in this passage?

Paul shows us how important gratitude, prayer, love and understanding are for relationships with brothers and sisters in Christ. Kingdom friendships move past polite conversation and into true partnership, deep concern, and expression of gratitude.

WHAT IS MY INITIAL REACTION?

Reflect on the relationships you have in your life. How much truth-telling goes on in these relationships?





LIFE GROUPS

LEADER GUIDE

How many *genuine* friendships do you have in your life? How do you feel about your answer to this question (grateful, sad, confused, etc.)?

Recall the “four times” all relationships go through from this week’s message: **Confusion, Conflict, Confrontation and Conclusion**. Which of these “times” tends to be the most problematic for you in your relationships? Why might this be?

Some people in your group may find that every time conflict arises in a relationship, they have difficulty moving forward into confrontation and conclusion. Others may discover that they tend to “cut and run” when a genuine friend confronts them with a difficult topic. This is a great question to camp out in for a while— gently challenge your group members to be honest about when they put their guard up and whether they are willing to participate in genuine kingdom relationships.

WHAT AM I GOING TO DO?

How good are you at expressing gratitude for the genuine friendships in your life? How will you improve in this area?

What is one step you can take this week to reinforce the genuine friendships in your life?

Read Ephesians 4:25-32. How does this passage speak to you, specifically? What changes do you sense God asking you to make in the way you relate to others? This passage presents such a balanced and challenging picture of genuine friendship and relationship in the body of Christ. We are called to speak truthfully (v.25), but this is balanced by an unwillingness to let unwholesome talk come from our mouths (v. 29). Kindness and compassion should mark our interactions with one another-- not rage, bitterness, and slander.

