

**Next Level | Week 2 - Authentic Friends****Message Big Idea**

Next Level friendships deepen with authenticity.

**Scripture**

1 Samuel 14:1-15, 1 Samuel 18:1-4, 1 Samuel 23:15-18 and Galatians 6:2

**Points to Keep In Mind**

1. If your group members are still getting familiar with the story of David and Goliath, read 1 Samuel 17. It's a bit long, but worth the effort!
2. Jonathan helped David find "strength in the Lord" by reminding David of God's promise to him, that he would be king over Israel and that Saul's plan to kill David would not succeed. That's what Next Level friends do – they remind one another of truth when circumstances are overwhelming and faith is faltering.
3. The "law of Christ" is to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul and strength and to love our neighbors as much as we love ourselves (Matthew 22:37-39). A person keeps all the other laws by fulfilling these two commandments. They summarize the Ten Commandments and the other Old Testament moral laws. The Good News is that Jesus came to fulfill the law (Matthew 5:17), so when we fall short, we can look to Jesus for forgiveness and depend on His righteousness and grace (Romans 3:23-26).
4. We can hide behind barriers that keep us from authentic friendships. People pleasing, the need to please and be liked by others, can keep us from speaking and voicing our genuine opinion. Comparing ourselves to others keeps us from being authentic because we fear that others will see our shortfalls and we won't measure up. Perfectionism is a barrier to authenticity because we don't allow the world to see our imperfections. When we constantly work, we have no time for honest self-reflection and cannot be available to others. Fear is the common factor in all of these barriers, the fear of being vulnerable, of our true selves being seen.
5. Not only does the question in #7 prompt introspection and allow people to reveal important aspects of themselves, but it also builds trust, credibility and confidence with the people you share it with. Authenticity sometimes feels scary, but it also builds intimacy. Encourage everyone to answer, but don't force it either. Some group members may not be ready to share at this level yet, and that's ok.

**Additional Questions and Resources**

1. Where do you see God at work in your life right now?
2. What next steps do you feel called to take in your faith journey?
3. Have you considered getting baptized? [communitychristian.org/baptism](http://communitychristian.org/baptism)
4. What have you been learning from the Community Daily? [communitychristian.org/daily](http://communitychristian.org/daily)
5. If someone is seeking professional counseling, you can always refer them to our resource page: [communitychristian.org/mentalhealth/](http://communitychristian.org/mentalhealth/)
6. Find out more about having a YOU+ conversation by visiting: [youplus.info](http://youplus.info)
7. How have you been able to BLESS others recently? (B-begin with prayer, L-listen, E-eat, S-serve and S-share your story)