



high school group study

jim burns

general editor



parents & family



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contents

how to use the <i>uncommon</i> group bible studies	9
a special note from jim burns	11

unit I: communication

session 1: good communication.	15
session 2: family roles and goals	35
session 3: expressing appreciation	49
session 4: the power of being there	65

unit II: respect

session 5: honor and obey	79
session 6: walking in your parents' shoes	97
session 7: a tribute to mom.	109
session 8: a father's love.	123

unit III: stress

session 9: resolving conflict.	143
session 10: frazzled families	159
session 11: divorce	175
session 12: family crises.	191

how to use the *uncommon* group bible studies

Each *Uncommon* Group Bible Study contains 12 sessions, which are divided into 3 stand-alone units of 4 sessions each. You may choose to teach all 12 sessions consecutively, to use just one unit, or to present individual sessions. You know your group, so do what works best for you and your students.

This is your leader's guidebook for teaching your group. Electronic files (in PDF format) of each session's student handouts are available for download at www.gospellight.com/uncommon/. The handouts include the "message," "dig," "apply," "reflect" and "meditation" sections of each study and have been formatted for easy printing. You may print as many copies as you need for your group.

Each session opens with a devotional meditation written for you, the youth leader. As hectic and trying as youth work is much of the time, it's important never to neglect your interior life. Use the devotions to refocus your heart and prepare yourself to share with kids the message that has already taken root in you. Each of the 12 sessions are divided into the following sections:

starter

Young people will stay in your youth group if they feel comfortable and make friends in the group. This section is designed for you and the students to get to know each other better.

message

The message section will introduce the Scripture reading for the session and get students thinking about how the passage applies to their lives.

dig

Many young people are biblically illiterate. In this section, students will dig into the Word of God and will begin to interact on a personal level with the concepts.

apply

Young people need the opportunity to think through the issues at hand. This section will get students talking about the passage of Scripture and interacting on important issues.

reflect

The conclusion to the study will allow students to reflect on some of the issues presented in the study on a more personal level.

meditation

A closing Scripture for the students to read and reflect on.

a special note from jim burns

My wife, Cathy, and I both grew up in traditional two-parent families. Although we wouldn't consider our homes perfect, we now realize that living in a two-parent family was a blessing not necessarily experienced by many young people today. Even the fact that both of our moms stayed home is no longer the norm. The truth of the matter is that many of the young people that you and I will work with now and in the future will come from families that are living with a variety of situations (divorce, death, abuse, blended families) that will impact the family unit.

Today, when we think of family, we must realize that the kids we are serving come from almost every type of family situation possible. Some may be scarred by varying degrees of dysfunction in their families. Many don't have both parents in the home, and others have had several dads or moms. Trying to blend two or more families together is rarely a seamless process. Today many students are torn between two or three families every day of their lives. What's even worse is that the tension is often magnified during holidays or special events in their lives when others are enjoying a spirit of celebration.

Needless to say, as you approach this most important subject, you will want to be especially sensitive and caring when it comes to these family issues. This book will unashamedly celebrate the biblical standards for families and hopefully many of your students will choose the godly pattern for their future families. The

important teaching point is to be as inclusive as Christ would be toward kids who believe they have a less-than-perfect family. I know you will punctuate each session with God's grace and love. The beauty of youth ministry is that although we can never replace the biological families of our students, we can offer them the fellowship of the family of God and a life-changing relationship with their perfect heavenly Father.



unit I

communication

My daughter Rebecca invited me to be her show-and-tell for her third-grade class.

I asked her, “Are the other daddies also coming to show and tell?”

“No, just you, Dad,” was her reply.

Well, this was one speaking gig that made me quite nervous. “What do you want me to say? Would you like me to share what I do?”

“No, Dad, just come and I’ll share you.”

When the day arrived, I had to speak to a high school assembly on sexuality that morning, and I was hardly nervous. But as I started driving to my daughter’s class, I could feel the nerves working overtime. *What would I say? Would I make Rebecca proud?*

I walked into the class. The children stopped what they were doing, turned and looked at me. Rebecca got up from her seat, led me to the front of the class and introduced me. “This is my

dad. His name is Jim. He's a great guy and he is bald!" (As if they couldn't tell!)

I talked for a few minutes, and then the children asked questions. Every kid put his or her hand up to ask a question. Matthew asked how old I was, and Mallory wanted to know if we had a dog. Most of the questions were about my family, and none of them were about my work.

When it was all finished, little Rebecca put her arms around me and said, "Thanks for coming to my class, Daddy. I'm so proud of you."

Wow! What a day. As I got back into my car to go to my office, I realized that my daughter and her friends didn't care much about the academic degrees I had earned or how much money I made. Their questions were personal and relational. It helped me realize that my daughter isn't impressed that I write or speak to students. For Rebecca, the power of me being there for her is what counts. She just likes to spend time with me.

This first section is about communicating, understanding and appreciating. I hope your students will finish this section with a greater appreciation for their parents and with the biblical communication skills needed for healthy relationships. God designed the family to love and be loved. In His design, the family is the central factor in bringing faith to children and in helping them know their roots.

As a youth worker, you have the privilege of helping your students have closer relationships with and better understandings of their families. Many issues of the day will fade, but strong family units are essential to the quality of our lives. Thank you for helping kids to develop better families. You have an important task.



session 1

good communication

Reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing.

PROVERBS 12:18

“Before I tell you anything, you have to promise *not* to tell my parents.” Sound familiar? Or maybe you’ve heard this one: “If my son or daughter knew I was speaking with you, they’d have an absolute fit. Promise me you won’t tell them that we spoke.”

Feeling stuck in the middle? What Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5:20 was uncannily right: You are an ambassador for Christ, a diplomat in the finest sense of the word, an international statesman representing both sides of two conflict-ridden interest groups marred by confusing language and authority problems: parents and teenagers. Talk about conflict of interests!

As a youth worker you have the precarious position of representing the interests of both the young people and the parents you serve. You ride the proverbial fence of winning the hearts of teenagers for Christ and providing the respect/approval/help/

support/(fill in the blank) of the parents you also serve. In short, you are not just a youth minister. Nor are you just an every-so-often-when-ever-a-need-arises minister to parents. Full-time, part-time, volunteer—you are a minister to families.

Good communication is a key sign of a healthy family, and one of your most important roles is to help facilitate positive communication between parents and teenagers. You are often called to be the oil to reduce the friction and heat resulting from family conflicts, misunderstandings and crises. If you feel stuck in the middle between the warring sides of a parent and teenager conflict, take a moment to stand back from the situation and remember that your role is to be pro-family. You are looking out for the best interests of parents *and* teenagers. Except in cases of physical, emotional or sexual abuse, you are a type of spiritual Switzerland. Neutral. Objective. Unbiased. You are there to help promote the growth of every family member.

There is no such thing as a professional parent, a totally together teenager or a perfect family. In one way, every family is in the tricky process of trying to figure out what it means to be a family. That's why your role in helping facilitate healthy communication is so critical to the families in your ministry. This session is filled with fantastic ideas to help parents and teenagers communicate more clearly and effectively with one another. By promoting these ideas and concepts with the families in your ministry, not only will you assist parents and teenagers in learning how to handle their inevitable conflicts, but you will also help them lay a strong foundation for healthy communication in the future.

The difference between the right word and the almost right word is the difference between lightning and the lightning bug.

MARK TWAIN



group study guide

good communication

starter

HOW DO YOU TALK? What is your communication style? Take the following communication quiz to find out. Choose one answer for each question.

1. At a large social gathering, you are most likely to . . .
 - a. interact with many different people, strangers included
 - b. talk one on one mostly with people you already know
 - c. use the opportunity to meet important people
 - d. leave as soon as you can
2. When you first arrive at an event, you are usually . . .
 - a. a little bit late, and you try to sneak in the back without being noticed
 - b. purposely a bit late—you like to get there when things have started happening already

- c. arrive right on time and feel impatient if the event starts late
 - d. arrive early so that you can be ready and organized when the event starts
3. If you were famous in your field, which of these careers would most suit you?
- a. movie star
 - b. head of a company
 - c. inventor
 - d. humanitarian
4. What style of entertainment do you most enjoy watching?
- a. something warm and friendly
 - b. something quirky and intellectual
 - c. something political or satirical
 - d. something wild, outrageous and/or fun
5. Of these four personality traits, you would consider your strongest to be . . .
- a. compassion
 - b. assertiveness
 - c. imagination
 - d. persistence
6. The statement that most closely describes you is . . .
- a. sensible and frugal
 - b. rational and quick-witted
 - c. sensitive and reliable
 - d. creative and fiery

7. Which appeals to you the most?
 - a. taking well-considered risks
 - b. helping people get along
 - c. discovering the secret behind a complex mystery
 - d. going to an exciting social event

8. When doing group projects, which part of the process is most important to you?
 - a. creating relationships with people
 - b. sorting out who is playing what role in the project
 - c. organizing the way the project is done
 - d. making sure the process of doing it is fun and exciting

9. If you suddenly have some spare time on a weekend, what you usually most want to do is . . .
 - a. contact several friends and see if there is something fun going on
 - b. have some quality time with one or just a few people
 - c. get a number of things done on your to-do list
 - d. focus your energy on one specific hobby or project

10. You want to buy a special gift for a new friend that you don't know very well. You are most likely to . . .
 - a. buy the first thing you see that you intuitively think they would like
 - b. carefully find just the right thing, after doing much comparison-shopping
 - c. buy the same special gift that you always buy for special people
 - d. get someone else to buy the gift, or just give your friend some money

11. Which description most fits you?
 - a. hard-working and ambitious
 - b. animated and talkative
 - c. focused and efficient
 - d. cooperative and gentle

12. Most of the time, when working, you prefer . . .
 - a. to do your job quietly on your own
 - b. to be an integral part of a team working together
 - c. to influence the team in new and creative directions
 - d. to be the leader and structure-maker for the team

13. When the phone rings, you . . .
 - a. answer it immediately and talk at length
 - b. look forward to the call, but wait a few rings before answering the phone
 - c. deal with whoever it is quickly and efficiently
 - d. hope someone else will answer it

14. Which do you admire more?
 - a. the ability to organize and be methodical
 - b. the ability to take charge in a chaotic situation
 - c. the ability to motivate others to succeed
 - d. the ability to make people feel comfortable and included

15. In terms of comedy, you most closely identify with people who can . . .
 - a. tell a heartwarming, funny story
 - b. tell a good joke
 - c. create great characters
 - d. tell a witty one-liner, pun or wordplay

16. If a conflict arises between you and a friend, your first reaction is to . . .
- a. make sure he or she understands your position
 - b. make sure the relationship doesn't get damaged
 - c. avoid that person for a while
 - d. find a compromise where you both get at least part of what you want

Answer Key: Circle the answers you chose, and then count the number of *As*, *Ds*, *Ns* and *Cs* you have and indicate this number at the bottom.

1.	a. D	b. N	c. A	d. C
2.	a. N	b. D	c. A	d. C
3.	a. D	b. A	c. C	d. N
4.	a. N	b. C	c. A	d. D
5.	a. N	b. A	c. D	d. C
6.	a. C	b. A	c. N	d. D
7.	a. A	b. N	c. C	d. D
8.	a. N	b. A	c. C	d. N

9.	a. D	b. N	c. D	d. C
10.	a. D	b. N	c. C	d. A
11.	a. A	b. D	c. C	d. N
12.	a. C	b. N	c. D	d. A
13.	a. D	b. N	c. A	d. C
14.	a. C	b. A	c. D	d. N
15.	a. N	b. A	c. D	d. C
16.	a. A	b. N	c. C	d. D

Total *As* _____

Total *Ds* _____

Total *Ns* _____

Total *Cs* _____

Read on about the various communication styles. Keep in mind that the descriptions that follow are extreme examples to illustrate how they differ. Most people are a combination of the four styles, and some people are so unique they don't fit into any style.

D: Demonstrators

Demonstrators are people-oriented, fast-paced and enthusiastic. They usually have more open and casual body language. They tend to be animated and outgoing and prefer an informal atmosphere. Demonstrators can be outrageous, spontaneous, excitable and sociable. They are ideas people who like to be in the limelight. Weaknesses may include being unreliable, self-centered, overly optimistic and indiscriminate.

A: Assertors

Assertors are fast-paced and direct like Demonstrators but are more task-oriented than people-oriented. They tend to be hard-working, ambitious, leader types. They are good at making decisions quickly and efficiently. They are goal-oriented, assertive and confident. Assertors are the take-charge people who let nothing stop them. Weaknesses may include being too impatient, competitive and judgmental.

C: Contemplators

Contemplators are task-oriented like Assertors but are more indirect and slow-paced. Contemplators tend to be analytical, detail-oriented, thinker types. They are persistent, good problem solvers, and pride themselves on their orderliness and accuracy. Often seen alone, they tend to have quiet, low-key personalities. Weaknesses may include being too withdrawn, rigid, closed-minded, and overly pessimistic.

N: Narrators

Narrators are slow-paced and indirect like Contemplators but are more people-oriented like Demonstrators. They are warm, friendly, gentle and cooperative. They highly value relationships over goals.

They are good at listening, have a sweet temperament, and tend to be open-minded. Most people find them to be loving, and emotionally intuitive. Weaknesses may include being overly meek and easily sidetracked.¹

message

Communication is the cornerstone of most relationships. Our relationships with friends, classmates, siblings and parents are shaped and developed by the words we use and the conversations we have. Different communication styles may impact how we like to speak or be spoken to, but one truth remains: Regardless of our communication style, God commands us to speak with love.

Read the following passage from Colossians 3:12-17. As you read these verses, consider the following questions: (1) Which traits does God want us to embody in our conversations? (2) Which parts of this passage describe your conversations? (3) Which parts of this passage describe areas you need to work on?

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

dig

1. Look back at the Colossians 3:12-17 passage. What descriptors do you see in this passage that should characterize your conversations? Write them here.

2. Which of these traits is easiest for you? Which is hardest?

3. Look back to the first question in this section. What are the differences between how you defined good communication and how God defines it?

- 4. Think of someone in your life with whom you have great communication. What makes your communication with that person easy and successful?

- 5. It can be tempting to blame difficult communications on the other person. “If only he’d listen more . . .” “If she would just try to understand . . .” But God calls us to be accountable for *our* actions and behaviors. Think of someone in your life with whom you have difficult communication. What could *you* do to improve your conversations?

- 6. Write three words that currently describe your communication with your family.

- 1.

- 2.

- 3.

7. Choose one trait from the Colossians passage that you could work on to improve your communication with your family, and then write some specific steps you can take to improve in this area.

I could improve my communication with my family by working on _____ . I could improve this trait by . . .

apply

1. How would you describe your communication with your parents? With your siblings?

2. There are many barriers that can prevent good communication from occurring. Check any of the following that might be inhibiting you and your parents from having better communication.

- Lack of time
- Failure to make communication a priority
- Spending too much time watching TV, listening to music, texting friends, talking on your cell phone, and so forth

- Lack of listening
- Lack of respect
- Guilt
- Anger
- Stubborn natures
- Memories of past rejection
- Feelings of inferiority, low self-esteem and worthlessness
- Misplaced anger—taking out anger at others on those closest to you
- Drugs and alcohol
- Other: _____

3. Do you think it's important to have good communication with your parents and siblings? Why or why not?

4. What benefits could come from having better communication in your home?

5. Read each of the following situations, and then consider ways the family could improve their communication.

Situation 1: *Braden and Maya's dad comes home from work every evening and immediately slumps into his chair. He turns on the TV, playfully wrestles with the dog, and then settles in to read the newspaper. Braden and Maya believe he pays more attention to their dog than to them. What advice would you give Braden and Maya?*

Situation 2: *Christina talks all the time. She loves to be the center of attention and always gives people her two cents' worth. Her younger brother Steve, however, rarely shares his thoughts or opinions. What advice would you give to Christina and Steve's family to create better communication between all members?*

Situation 3: *Miles doesn't like to share things with his family and clams up whenever his parents ask him questions. When his mother questions any of his behavior, he immediately gets defensive and yells at her. What advice would you give their family?*

6. Communication is a key to any relationship and a must for quality family relationships. But good communication takes work. One way to improve your communication with your family is to *spend time together*. Spending time together will allow you and your family to get to know one another better (which is vital for creating understanding) and will enable conversations—real conversations—to happen. So, when was the last time you hung out with your parents? What did you do together?

7. How many minutes/hours each week do you spend with your parent(s)? What are three activities that you could enjoy together with one or both of your parents that would allow for conversation (for example, taking the dog for a walk, going out for coffee, game night, running errands together, having family dinners)?

8. Another way to improve communication with your family is to *listen more*. Ironically, our communication becomes better when we speak less and listen more. When we talk, we often tend to focus on *our* needs, *our* problems and

what *we* are getting out of a relationship. Clear, quality communication only occurs when two people meet at the same place, on common ground, and find understanding. How would you rank yourself as a listener?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Hard for me to listen to others					Easy for me to listen to others				

9. What can you *do* to show someone that you are listening?

10. A third way to improve communication with your family members is to *build trust*. Good communication has to be rooted in trust. Each person has to trust that the other person is being honest, sincere and isn't trying to cause harm. Trust is something that is earned and deepened over time. Think about your relationship with your parents, and then answer the following questions.

Do you trust your parents?

Yes No *I don't know*

Do you feel like your parents trust you?

Yes No *I don't know*

Are you honest with your parents?

Always *Usually* *Ocasionally* *Rarely*

Do you say what you mean and mean what you say with them?

Always Usually Ocasionally Rarely

Do you believe your parents have your best interests in mind?

Yes No I don't know

What is one thing you could do that would help develop your parents' trust in you?

11. Read through the following skills, actions and behaviors that help build strong communication. Think about them in terms of your relationship with your parents. Which of these are you good at? Which of these need more work?

Pretty Good at	Needs Work
<input type="checkbox"/> Wanting to talk with my parents.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Listening attentively.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Looking a person in the eye.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Being trustworthy.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Viewing the situation from the other person's perspective.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Taking the time to understand the other person.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Being honest.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Staying focused on one issue at a time.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Being myself.	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/> Not interrupting.	<input type="checkbox"/>

Pretty Good at

Needs Work

- ___ Being willing to say, "I don't know." _____
- ___ Being willing to say, "I'm sorry." _____
- ___ Being willing to say, "I was wrong." _____
- ___ Being willing to say, "I love you." _____
- ___ Asking questions. _____
- ___ Being sincere. _____
- ___ Having a caring attitude. _____
- ___ Believing in the worth of the other person. _____
- ___ Being humble. _____
- ___ Avoiding exaggerations like "You *always*" or "You *never*." _____
- ___ Taking responsibilities for my actions, behaviors, and attitudes. _____

12. What is your strongest skill as a communicator? What area do you struggle the most in?

reflect

1. We tend to only work on those things that we value. Do you believe that having good communication with your parents and siblings is a worthwhile goal? Why or why not?

2. Do you think the way in which you communicate with your parents can please and honor God? How?

3. Think about someone you know who has great communication with his or her parents. What do both sides do to make the communication work so well?

4. How does your family usually communicate with each other? What, if anything, would you change?

5. What are ways your family has solved a communication problem?

6. Think about a time you felt put down in a conversation with someone. What did the person do to make you feel that way? How did it impact your communication?

7. Imagine watching two people having a conversation. How would you know if they were respecting each other?

8. Do you show your parents respect in your conversations? Do you feel that they respect you?

meditation



He who guards his mouth and his tongue,
guards his soul from troubles.

PROVERBS 21:23, NASB

Note

1. Carla Rieger, "Communication Style Quiz," © 2009, www.carlarieger.com. Used by permission.

family: where you can become your best while looking your worst

The teen years have a reputation for being tough on families. Not-quite-young-adults want freedom and independence, while their parents want safety and peace of mind. When these desires conflict again and again, it's easy for parents and teens to forget that God uses families (even at their worst) to bring out the best in His children! With *Parents & Family*, you can help the students in your group learn to better relate with their parents and siblings, and help them to understand and appreciate how God wants to shape them through their family relationships. These 12 sessions of youth-friendly Bible study are the newest edition to the *Uncommon* curriculum series created by veteran youth minister Jim Burns. Action-packed, fun activities and insightful discussion outlines will get your teens thinking and talking about how to honor their parents, act with love toward their brothers and sisters and become active, contributing members of their families

I don't know anyone who knows and understands the needs of the youth worker like Jim Burns.

DOUG FIELDS

Senior Director of HomeWord Center for Youth and Family
@ Azusa Pacific University
Simply Youth Ministry (www.simplyyouthministry.com)

I heartily recommend these studies.

RICK WARREN

Author of *The Purpose Driven Life*



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