

'Communication is essential to developing healthy relationships, healthy families, and healthy churches. Communication is also essential in small groups. Without proper communication with God and with others, your group will become stagnant and superficial. The following four channels of communication (adapted

'from Ralph Neighor) characterize a healthy small group.

1. God to group. People want to hear from God. They seek His will and desire to hear His voice. Take time in your group to be silent and to read the Scriptures. Listen as the Holy Spirit works through the Word of God to convict you and challenge you. Listen for the still, small voice of the Lord as He communicates His purpose for your group or for a particular meeting through the Spirit, through others, and through His word.

2. Group to God. We not only hear from God, we respond to Him. A response can take the form of a prayer, a praise, a reading of Scripture back to God, a song, or a quiet devotion that expresses feelings to God.

3. Group member to group member. Vulnerable, authentic, truthful communication among group members will enable your group to become a powerful vehicle for life change. Groups grow when members express feelings, words of encouragement, or hurts to one another. Remember, Jesus said, "You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:32). Groups characterized by truth-telling are groups that experience freedom in Christ. When members speak loving, caring truths to one another, groups avoid becoming superficial and pretentious.

Expressing Anger in Groups

There are two ways of expressing anger in groups. "I" messages are clear and confessional. The person using "I" messages owns their anger, responsibility, or demands without placing blame. "You" messages are most often attacks, criticisms, labels, devaluation of the other person, or ways of fixing blame. When angry, attempt to give clear, simple "I" messages.

"I" Messages

I am angry.

I feel rejected.

I don't like the wall between us.

I don't like blaming or being blamed.

I want respectful friendship with you again.

I want the freedom to say yes or no.

You" Messages

You make me angry.

You're judging and rejecting me.

You're building a wall between us.

You've got to respect me or you're not my friend.

You're blaming everything on me.

You're trying to run my life.