

TUTORIAL

4.1

God has spoken (part 1)

This tutorial introduces the whole area of *communication* by looking at God as the *Great Communicator*. It focuses on God's actions in history to show that communication is an inherent feature of His character and that He always desires to communicate clearly and effectively. It also introduces the idea that God has chosen to use human beings to communicate His message to Man.

God gives meaning to communication

John 1:1 *In the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God.*

God always shows His personality in communication - just like holiness or love, communication is inherent in the character of God.

That anything can (1) truly be known, and (2) that it can actually be spoken about, is rooted in the nature of God, because He is the original Communicator. Without a personal God, no idea or word has greater value than another. There is no sound in a vacuum, and no real communication without God.

God communicates through creation

Creation was an act of communication - into the great silence of eternity, He spoke - "Let there be light".

Psalms 33:6 *The LORD merely spoke, and the heavens were created. He breathed the word, and all the stars were born.*

Romans 1:20 *For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse for not knowing God.*

God made man to listen

Genesis 1:27 *So God created human beings in his own image.*

God made man to hear Him - with a mind and emotions and a will - so that we have the ability to understand and love and choose to obey our Creator. The One who speaks and communicates created people who could hear and understand Him. As we come to teach His Word we can have this assurance about the people we teach.

God speaks with man

Having made someone to listen, God always speaks to him - *"And God said..."*
"God said to the man..." *"And the Lord commanded the man..."*

God has never left man in a moral limbo. Man's life was to be a response to the ongoing revelation of who God is. Understanding and a real knowledge of God would result in love, worship and obedience.

Genesis 3:9 *Then the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?"*

He is not just a distant God passing on divine laws, but a personal God, involved in the lives and everyday affairs of human beings.

Sin breaks communication

Adam and Eve listened to God's Enemy.

Genesis 3:5 *"God knows that your eyes will be opened as soon as you eat it, and you will be like God, knowing both good and evil."*

They chose to be speakers rather than listeners - to tell their own story rather than to hear God tell it from his own, true, perspective. Then shame and fear entered into the relationship for the first time. Communication was broken.

God's gracious commitment to communication is unfailing

Even at that point God promised the coming of the One who would restore communication fully.

Down through the years, God was the one who maintained communication. He sought to communicate through His chosen people. Through the prophets. He lived among them in a house made of the skins of animals. He provided the means of the sacrifices as a temporary covering for sins.

Even though they refused to listen many times, He did not stop speaking. Through angels, on stone tablets, on a wall, in dreams, through unbelievers, even through a donkey...in a small still voice and in thunder - God showed His grace and His desire to communicate.

Nehemiah 9:17,30,31 *They refused to obey and did not remember the miracles you had done for them... 30 In your love, you were patient with them for many years. You sent your Spirit, who warned them through the prophets. But still they wouldn't listen! So once again you allowed the peoples of the land to conquer them. 31 But in your great mercy, you did not destroy them completely or abandon them forever. What a gracious and merciful God you are!*

God communicated Himself through Christ

Isaiah 7:14 *All right then, the Lord himself will give you the sign. Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son and will call him Immanuel (which means 'God is with us').*

John 1:9 *The one who is the true light, who gives light to everyone, was coming into the world.*

John 1:14 *So the Word became human and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son.*

Hebrews 1:1 *Long ago God spoke many times and in many ways to our ancestors through the prophets. 2 And now in these final days, he has spoken to us through his Son. God promised everything to the Son as an inheritance, and through the Son he created the universe. 3 The Son radiates God's own glory and expresses the very character of God, and he sustains everything by the mighty power of his command. When he had cleansed us from our sins, he sat down in the place of honour at the right hand of the majestic God in heaven.*

God restored communication at Calvary

Matthew 27:50,51 *Then Jesus shouted out again, and he released his spirit. 51 At that moment the curtain in the sanctuary of the Temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. The earth shook, rocks split apart.*

Hebrews 10:19,20 *And so, dear brothers and sisters, we can boldly enter heaven's Most Holy Place because of the blood of Jesus. **20** By his death, Jesus opened a new and life-giving way through the curtain into the Most Holy Place.*

Ephesians 2:18 *Now all of us can come to the Father through the same Holy Spirit because of what Christ has done for us.*

God speaks to His children by His Spirit who lives in them

John 16:13 *When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own but will tell you what he has heard. He will tell you about the future.*

Romans 8:14 *For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God.*

The Holy Spirit will communicate through us and guide us as we communicate with others.

God speaks through His word

Romans 10:17 *So faith comes from hearing, that is, hearing the Good News about Christ.*

2 Timothy 3:16,17 *All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realise what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. **17** God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work.*

From God's mercy and grace (His "condescension" - no adequate word in our lexicon), He chooses to partner with man in communicating His will - His, the Creator's, version of the way things actually are, and the way they should be.

He appointed man (the beings created in His image) as His ambassadors - His mouthpieces to the rest of creation. He chose man to communicate. His Word - God breathed, written by human hand, spoken by the prophets, in human languages, into fallen human cultures, using human devices of communication: idiom, analogies, metaphors, parables.

The ultimate proof of God's commitment to speaking with a human voice, in a way that is intelligible to man, is the incarnation.

1 John 1:1 *We proclaim to you the one who existed from the beginning, whom we have heard and seen. We saw him with our own eyes and touched him with our own hands. He is the Word of life.*

The pre-existent God, the Creator, now communicating with a human voice, with human gestures, through visible actions and reactions - Truth was personified in human form.

1 John 1:2-3 *This one who is life itself was revealed to us, and we have seen him. And now we testify and proclaim to you that he is the one who is eternal life. He was with the Father, and then he was revealed to us. 3 We proclaim to you what we ourselves have actually seen and heard so that you may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.*

And the incarnation gives us the message, mandate and model to be teachers, proclaimers, disciplers, modellers of Truth likewise. And to call others into this same privilege - to be God's mouthpiece and embodiment for Truth.

God speaks through His Church

Mark 3:14 *Then he appointed twelve of them and called them his apostles. They were to accompany him, and he would send them out to preach.*

Acts 1:8 *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere - in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.*

Ephesians 3:10 *God's purpose in all this was to use the church to display his wisdom in its rich variety to all the unseen rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.*

We (the Church) are God's first choice for communicating His Truth. On the day of Pentecost, as the plan of God for His church was becoming clearer, Peter spoke to the people who were gathered there from many different countries.

Acts 2:39 *" This promise is to you, and to your children, and even to the Gentiles—all who have been called by the Lord our God."*

1 Chronicles 16:24 *Publish his glorious deeds among the nations. Tell everyone about the amazing things he does.*



DISCUSSION POINTS

God has spoken (part 1)

1. Think about the specific ways God's Enemy has attempted to divert man's attention from God's clear message through Creation. How has he tried to confuse what God is saying through creation, and what effect has that had on the ways people see the world around them?
2. Hebrews 1:1 says, "*Long ago God spoke many times and in many ways to our ancestors through the prophets.*" What are some of the specific ways and times that God communicated with man before the coming of His Son?



ACTIVITIES

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1. Read the short write-up below on four elements of effective communication. As you have conversations with people this week, make sure to actively think about these aspects of communication. Make some notes summarizing your observations:
 - Do you agree that these four aspects are important, and can you think of any more areas to add?
 - How effective are you in applying these things as you communicate?
 - How effective were the people you spoke to in clearly communicating? (you don't have to mention any names...)
 - Can you relate any of these aspects to the way God communicates?

Essential Elements of Good Communication

- *Be concise* - Don't say more than you have to say to get your message across clearly. It's important to try to be clear and unambiguous when you communicate with others. Taking a long time to say something can be frustrating for your listeners and can even obscure your main message.
- *Be a good listener* - You need to listen to the person you are trying to communicate with. Why? Because your message must be heard for good communication to take place. People will not listen to you if your message isn't relevant to them. You will not be relevant if you have not engaged with who the other person is, and what they are saying. They have no obligation to listen to you if you have shown no interest in listening to them. So, one of the most important communication skills to have is to be a good, active listener. If you tune someone out or already know what you're going to say when he stops talking, you're not listening. Most people just want to be heard.
- *Ask for Feedback* - Make sure that you get your message across to the other person by asking for feedback. Listen to the person's response, and respond with anything that didn't come across clearly. You can avoid a lot of miscommunication by going one step further and asking the other person for their opinion on a topic or for their reaction to your ideas.
- *Non-verbal Communication* - Non-verbal communication is just as important as verbal communication, and people are very good at reading what you are really thinking. Facial expressions, body language and tone of voice all convey important information about how you feel about what you are saying. How you say something can completely change how your actual words are received.