

WHERE DO WE BEGIN?

Lesson 1

If we want to improve upon our ability evangelize and defend the faith, we need a theology of communication. Who better to cast our cares and minds to than the Author of communication? We speak because the Triune God is himself the God who speaks.



We begin with God

- “Hear O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one” (Deut 6:4)
- There is only one, living, true, and eternal God. God is one, self-existent, independent. God is completely satisfied within himself. He is, in and of himself, not dependent upon anything or anyone.
- Westminster Confession of Faith 2.2 “God has all life, glory, goodness, blessedness, in and of Himself; and is alone in and unto himself all-sufficient, not standing in need of any creatures which he has made, nor deriving any glory from them...”
- Even if man were without sin, he still could not be internally self-satisfied because he are a contingent creature, forever dependent upon his Creator. We have to have communion with him and others.

The Triune Communication of the Persons

- God is Personal. There is only one, living, true, and eternal God, in three Persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.
- The three divine persons of God have eternally delighted in one another from before the creation of the world in all eternity.
 - “And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed...” “Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.” (John 17:5, 24).
- First, note the independence and self-existence of the Persons. God has always had all knowledge and didn’t need to take time to surmise anything because all knowledge has always been in him. After all, he is all knowing (omniscient). God didn’t take time to become his attributes. He is his attributes and has always been his attributes. He is knowledge. He is love. He is wisdom. God has always been in perfect communion within himself in the Persons. For our discussion, this is important for our class.
- Secondly, before God created, we see the Persons were in mutual glory and love. They were eternally communicating with each other.
- “God’s triunity is the key to understanding not only God’s speech but how His speech relates to our speech...communication is first a divine characteristic and of divine origin that functions as the means of personal communion.”¹ God’s speaking never had a beginning. It never had an end. To learn about communication, that is to share and defend the faith is “to humbly explore the eternal fellowship of our triune God, to ponder his ways, and to expand our understanding of God and of his images.”²
- You can’t be a better sharer of good news, a better lover of your neighbor, a better apologizer for truth, a better speaker, unless you first look to the Divine Communicator.

¹ Aaron L. Garriott, *A Word Fitly Spoken* (Stanford, FL.: Ligonier Ministries, 2025) 10.

² Garriott, 10.

- “His immeasurable blessedness, in the most sweet fellowship of the persons, the unanimity in their joint counsels, by which the persons most perfectly know and love each other, rest in each other, and reciprocate their own perfection to each other.”³

Honest Communication

- God did not create us to add to himself. Instead, since he is the fullness of who he is, out of the counsel of the Persons was a fullness to manifest himself to his creation, namely the pinnacle of his creation, to manifest himself to his image-bearers. He intends to commune (communicate) with us.
- John Owen states, “He made them, not that he might have advantage by them, but that he might communicate of his own goodness to them.”⁴

Communication is essential to our humanity

- Since we are made in the *imago Dei*, communication is essential to who we are. We are communicative beings. Arguments for or against the use of words with God are at best reductionistic. To reason for language, words, and signs, apart from the Triune Personal God, is to leave man without sufficient knowledge of oneself.
- Our communication, in and of ourselves, is grossly limited, deficient, and insufficient. We are to speak according to what is true because God is truth.

Q. 144. What are the duties required in the 9th commandment?

A. The duties required in the 9th commandment are, the preserving and promoting of truth between man and man, and the good name of our neighbor, as well as our own; appearing and standing for the truth; and from the heart, sincerely, freely, clearly, and fully, speaking the truth, and only the truth, in matters of judgment and justice, and in all other things whatsoever; a charitable esteem of our neighbors; loving, desiring, and rejoicing in their good name; sorrowing for and covering of their infirmities; freely acknowledging of their gifts and graces, defending their innocence; a ready receiving of a good report, and unwillingness to admit of an evil report, concerning them; discouraging talebearers (*tattletales*), flatterers, and slanderers; love and care of our own good name, and defending it when needed requires; keeping of lawful promises; studying and practicing of whatsoever things are true, honest, lovely, and of good report.

Sin alienates our right communion

- Communion with God was without sin but original sin has alienated us from right communion. This means that right communication is also alienated from God.

Q. 145. What are the sins forbidden in the ninth commandment?

A. The sins forbidden in the ninth commandment are, all prejudicing the truth, and the good name of our neighbors, as well as our own, especially in public judicature; giving false evidence; suborning false witnesses; wittingly appearing and pleading for an evil cause; out-facing and overbearing the truth; passing unjust sentence; calling evil good, and good evil; rewarding the wicked according to the work of the righteous, and the righteous according to the work of the wicked; forgery; concealing the truth; undue silence in a just cause, and holding our peace when iniquity calleth for either a reproof from ourselves, or complaint to others; speaking the truth unseasonably, or maliciously to a wrong end, or perverting it to a wrong

³ Petrus van Mastricht, *Theoretical-Practical Theology*, vol 2, *Faith in the Triune God*, ed. Joel R. Beeke, trans. Todd M. Rester (Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage, 2019), 521.

⁴ *The Works of John Owen*, ed. William H. Goold (Edinburgh, Scotland: T&T Clark, n.d.), 9:429.

meaning, or in doubtful and equivocal expressions, to the prejudice of truth or justice; speaking untruth, lying, slandering, backbiting, detracting, tale-bearing, whispering, scoffing, reviling, rash, harsh, and partial censuring; misconstruing intentions, words, and actions; flattering, vain-glorious boasting, thinking or speaking too highly or too meanly of ourselves or others; denying the gifts and graces of God; aggravating smaller faults; hiding, excusing, or extenuating of sins, when called to a free confession; unnecessary discovering of infirmities; raising false rumors, receiving and countenancing evil reports, and stopping our ears against just defense; evil suspicion; envying or grieving at the deserved credit of any, endeavoring or desiring to impair it, rejoicing in their disgrace and infamy; scornful contempt; fond admiration; breach of lawful promises; neglecting such things as are of good report; and practicing or not avoiding ourselves, or not hindering what we can in others, such things as procure an ill name.

- In sin, men and women die for want of right relationship. Sin turns us in on ourselves such that we become more and more inward focused and self-referential. Sin makes us infatuated with ourselves.

The gospel is heavenly communication that has brought us into right communion

- The gospel is the overflow of the inter-Trinitarian blessedness to redeem sinners.
- In the fullness of time, the unbegotten Father sends the begotten Son who willingly condescends to accomplish atonement for our sin, and the Father and the Son send the Spirit who applies the work of salvation at just the right time. We are born anew, indwelt by the Spirit of abundant life.
- You and I have gone from narcissistic self-love to outward-facing personal communion with proper love for God and love for neighbor. This regeneration, this new beginning, means our communication now changes.

Communion with God renovates our communication

The divine purpose for humanity is to commune with his Creator and his fellow image-bearers out of the overflow of God in us.

1 Cor 2:14-15, 17-18: For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might *no longer live for themselves but for him* who for their sake died and was raised...Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through *Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation...*(*emphasis mine*).

- Right communion with God means we now image Christ, who is the fullness of divine communication.
- Since God has made satisfaction for us through Christ we reflect his glory. We live with God at work through us as stewards of the gospel.
- Far be it for anyone of us to retract from the power of God at work in us, but if we do, remember the following words of God to Moses' fear "Oh, my Lord, I am not eloquent, either in the past or since you have spoken to your servant, but I am slow of speech and of tongue."

Then the LORD said to him, "Who has made man's mouth? Who makes him mute, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the LORD? Now therefore go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak." (Exodus 4:10-12)