



The nature of God as communicative defines God as a speaking God. He is a God who communicates with his creation, he reveals himself, and he listens and responds to his creation. This distinguishes the God of the Bible from other idols and fictitious deities who are silent and distant from the people who claim them. When God speaks, he makes himself understandable by using human language. God's words are authoritative and all powerful as creation bends around and submits to his words. God has used various modes to communicate like a burning bush, the prophets, a cloud, and a mountain. Through God's speaking, the world is created and renewed. In fact, these speech-acts serve as bookends in the Bible—the first and final things (Gen. 1:1-3; Rev. 21:5-8). Lastly, God's perfect and complete revelation is Jesus Christ (John 1:1-18; 1 John 1:1-4; Heb. 1:1-2).

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DISCUSSION #1: God Speaks

The nature of God as communicative defines God as a speaking God. He is a God who communicates with his creation, he reveals himself, and he listens and responds to his creation. This distinguishes the God of the Bible from other idols and fictitious deities who are silent and distant from the people who claim them. When God speaks, he makes himself understandable by using human language. God's words are authoritative and all powerful as creation bends around and submits to his words. God has used various modes to communicate like a burning bush, the prophets, a cloud, and a mountain. Through God's speaking, the world is created and renewed. In fact, these speech-acts serve as bookends in the Bible—the first and final things (Gen. 1:1-3; Rev. 21:5-8). Lastly, God's perfect and complete revelation is Jesus Christ (John 1:1-18; 1 John 1:1-4; Heb. 1:1-2).

In this discussion we will unpack how God speaks and has spoken throughout human history.

MY STORY | Starting Place

Can you remember a time when someone you looked up to, found influential, or important actually spoke to you? Describe the situation and how it impacted you. Do you remember what that person said? Was it important to you to listen to his or her words?

DIGGING DEEPER | Practical Biblical Application

Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. Hebrews 1:1-2

Can you think of examples of “at many times and in many ways” God spoke throughout the Old Testament? What are some of these “times” and “ways?”

What is the earliest example of God speaking in the Bible you can think of? Why is God's communication significant?

Why do you think God chose to be communicative with his creation?

Perhaps you have heard of the term deism. Deism is essentially the belief that if there is a god, that god created, set the world in motion, but afterwards took a step back from all of it and now watches from afar and does not intervene or communicate with his creation.

Is the God of the Bible “deistic” in any way? (Namely that He is letting the natural consequences of human action just happen?)

Look up 3-4 of the following verses together: Genesis. 12:1; 26:2; 31:3; Deuteronomy 4:12; Isaiah 6:9; Jeremiah 10:5; Daniel 9:6; Hosea 12:10.

What conclusions do you draw about God’s level of involvement from these verses?

Have you at various points in your faith, accidentally or intentionally, adopted a deistic view of God (that God was present but not actually involved)? How do you know if that view of him is accurate or inaccurate?

Going deeper: if God is a speaking God, why would it be important to listen to him? How and in what ways are you listening to God?

GROWING TOGETHER | Spiritual Friendship

Who are the influential voices in your life today? How are these people helping or hindering you in your spiritual growth?

Is listening to good Christian teaching the same as listening to God? Why or why not?

How can we, as a spiritual community, encourage one another to listen to and hear God?

Are there any spiritual disciplines that help you to tune-into what God is saying to you? If so, please share these with the group.

If you feel as though you struggle to hear God, or have a hard time understanding his spoken word in Scripture, who can you ask for help in this area? Is that something you could do with the people around you now?

MOVING OUTWARD | Faith in Action

Make a phone call this week, send a text message to a friend, or have dinner with your spouse, and ask them what God has been saying to them lately.

DISCUSSION #2: God Hears

The nature of God as communicative defines God as a speaking God. He is a God who communicates with his creation, he reveals himself, and he listens and responds to his creation. This distinguishes the God of the Bible from other idols and fictitious deities who are silent and distant from the people who claim them. When God speaks, he makes himself understandable by using human language. God's words are authoritative and all powerful as creation bends around and submits to his words. God has used various modes to communicate like a burning bush, the prophets, a cloud, and a mountain. Through God's speaking, the world is created and renewed. In fact, these speech-acts serve as bookends in the Bible—the first and final things (Gen. 1:1-3; Rev. 21:5-8). Lastly, God's perfect and complete revelation is Jesus Christ (John 1:1-18; 1 John 1:1-4; Heb. 1:1-2).

This week's discussion will cover how God hears the requests and petitions of his people.

MY STORY | Starting Place

Is there an instance you can recall where you spoke to someone who didn't hear you? Sure, maybe they were listening, but they didn't really hear you. What was that like? What emotions or thoughts did you have?

DIGGING DEEPER | Practical Biblical Application

And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him.

1 John 5:14-15

Before jumping to the "ask" part of these verses, the author speaks of the confidence we have that God hears us. In your own prayer life, is this something that is easy or difficult for you to believe? Explain.

Read two other passages from this list with your group: Psalm. 66:17-20; Jeremiah 29:12-13; Matthew 7:7-11; 1 Peter 3:12.

What do you think it means, looks like, and feels like to be heard by God?

An illustration many people have used to describe what their prayer life feels like at times is that their prayers seem to hit the ceiling and not go anywhere. Have you ever felt this way? What do you think causes these types of experiences?

Based on the verses read thus far, is it really true that our prayers hit the ceiling and don't go anywhere? How have your feelings or perceptions of your prayer life impacted what you believe about God?

Going deeper: the big idea behind this list of verses is to illustrate a central truth about God: that he is a hearing God. So, whether we feel like we are heard by him or not does not change the reality that he does hear his people. What would your prayer life look like if you believed this truth more than you believed your feelings about prayer?

GROWING TOGETHER | Spiritual Friendship

Take some time to share with your group today what you've been believing about God hearing you, or not hearing you. What are the assumptions you've made? What is the truth you've been holding on to?

As a group, how can you encourage and remind one another today that God is hearing you?

Bonus: set a timer for 5 minutes, and as a group, sit comfortably with eyes closed, taking deep breaths, and



imagine Jesus sitting across from each of you individually. Take those 5 minutes and speak to him (silently or out loud) as though you're speaking to a close friend, family member, or spouse. Imagine his eyes meeting yours, his head nodding, his hands sitting in his lap or under his chin. Most importantly, imagine his body language responding to you like someone who knows you deeply would. Maybe he doesn't say anything back to you in this exercise, and that is okay! The point is that you see and intentionally feel that God is not just listening, he is hearing you perfectly.

MOVING OUTWARD | Faith in Action

As you begin your week, intentionally pray for God to reveal to you someone in your life who needs to be reminded that God is hearing them, and that their prayers are not hitting the ceiling and coming back down. Once that person comes to mind, call them, text them, email them and begin by simply saying, "I am sensing the Lord asking me to share this with you..."

DISCUSSION #3: God Responds

The nature of God as communicative defines God as a speaking God. He is a God who communicates with his creation, he reveals himself, and he listens and responds to his creation. This distinguishes the God of the Bible from other idols and fictitious deities who are silent and distant from the people who claim them. When God speaks, he makes himself understandable by using human language. God's words are authoritative and all powerful as creation bends around and submits to his words. God has used various modes to communicate like a burning bush, the prophets, a cloud, and a mountain. Through God's speaking, the world is created and renewed. In fact, these speech-acts serve as bookends in the Bible—the first and final things (Gen. 1:1-3; Rev. 21:5-8). Lastly, God's perfect and complete revelation is Jesus Christ (John 1:1-18; 1 John 1:1-4; Heb. 1:1-2).

In this discussion we will learn how God responds to us in word, action, in the sending of the Holy Spirit, and ultimately in the person of Jesus Christ.

MY STORY | Starting Place

Read receipts. This invention in smart phones across the world lets texters know when their words have or haven't been read by the recipient. This little feature can add a lot of comfort or anxiety to one's life depending on personality and message content.

How do you typically let someone know you've received their communication? Do you respond right away? Do you let them know you're thinking about it? Or are you silent until you have the time, words, or appropriate response? What are your preferences?

DIGGING DEEPER | Practical Biblical Application

Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us." Jesus said to him...

...And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you. John 14:8-9a, 16-17

The first piece of verse 9 has been put here for context. Read the whole interaction before discussing (verses 8-17) for the entire picture of this interaction.

Here we have a recorded response of Jesus to one of his disciples. Now, think about the question Philip is asking. What is he asking for, and why?

Have you ever asked God to confirm his identity or to prove himself? Share what you asked for and what you needed.

When was the last time you experienced doubt that God was living and active in your life? Is that a current struggle? If not, how did you overcome or deal with this doubt?

As Philip is asking Jesus for God the Father to be revealed to him, Jesus responds by saying the Holy Spirit will be in you and you will know the Father because the Father will be in you by means of the Holy Spirit (v. 17).

Take a few moments to talk about and process the dwelling of the Holy Spirit inside you as one of God's primary responses to you in your life. Look up two of the Genesis references and Hebrews 1 from this list: Genesis 12:1 26:2; 31:3; Hebrews 1:1-2. Name how God has responded throughout time in these examples. How has God responded to his people throughout the Bible?



Coming now to the times we are in, on this side of the cross and resurrection, the Holy Spirit plays the primary role in God's current responses to his people. Have you viewed the Holy Spirit in this role before? How does that impact your dependence on the Holy Spirit? Have you thought before about how God is responding to you through the promptings of the Holy Spirit?

GROWING TOGETHER | Spiritual Friendship

Even though God-in-flesh was right before him, Philip asked Jesus to see the Father. This reveals a certain level of doubt Philip had in Jesus even though God was right in front of him!

If this is possible for one of Jesus' disciples, it is possible for us to doubt God's identity and involvement in our lives. How does your group, this spiritual community, play a role in helping one another remember the truth about God in all circumstances?

Is anyone in this group feeling as though God is silent in their lives? What have you collectively learned from this conversation that would help encourage one another? What is the truth about God responding to his people?

MOVING OUTWARD | Faith in Action

Knowing how comforting it is for a person to confirm that they have heard you and continue to listen, is there someone in your life you can reassure that you are there for them? Does your spouse need to be reminded of this? A friend? A family member?

Even further, is there a person in your life who would benefit from you reminding them that the Holy Spirit is in them, working, moving, speaking, and responding to them?

DISCUSSION #4: God Reveals

The nature of God as communicative defines God as a speaking God. He is a God who communicates with his creation, he reveals himself, and he listens and responds to his creation. This distinguishes the God of the Bible from other idols and fictitious deities who are silent and distant from the people who claim them. When God speaks, he makes himself understandable by using human language. God's words are authoritative and all powerful as creation bends around and submits to his words. God has used various modes to communicate like a burning bush, the prophets, a cloud, and a mountain. Through God's speaking, the world is created and renewed. In fact, these speech-acts serve as bookends in the Bible—the first and final things (Gen. 1:1-3; Rev. 21:5-8). Lastly, God's perfect and complete revelation is Jesus Christ (John 1:1-18; 1 John 1:1-4; Heb. 1:1-2).

This discussion focuses on the theological topics of general and specific revelation. General revelation is God making himself known through creation (what can be seen, touched, and observed), and specific revelation is God's speech, action, and intervention in human history (Rom. 1). Specific revelation is known through Scripture, the person of Jesus Christ, and the presence of the Holy Spirit.

MY STORY | Starting Place

Have you ever been so compelled by an experience in nature that you tangibly felt the presence of God, or learned something new about him? What about a notable encounter with Scripture?

DIGGING DEEPER | Practical Biblical Application

For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. Rom. 1:19-20

When Paul writes, “the things that have been made,” what do you think he means?

What other invisible attributes of God do you see revealed in creation? Why do you suppose God has revealed himself in this way?

In verse 20, Paul concludes his point by saying, “So they are without excuse.” Who are “they?” And what excuse can they not make?

What observations or conclusions should someone come to by simply general revelation through nature?

In another discussion, the term deism was defined, which is essentially the belief that if there is a god, he created the world and then took a step back from creation and does not intervene or communicate with it. In light of Romans 1, is this true of God? Why or why not?

If God is revealing himself through creation, (the things that can be seen), what does that imply about his nature? Is God relational? Does he desire to be known? If so, how do we know this by looking at or experiencing nature?

Romans 1 confirms from where the theological topic of General Revelation comes. General revelation is a term used to define what Paul articulates here in Romans 1, which is that “*God has shown it to them.*” His invisible attributes “*have been clearly perceived ... in the things that have been made.*”



For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account. Hebrews 4:12-13

From your own experience, can you describe a time Scripture demonstrated itself as living and active? What was that like? What did it reveal to you or about you?

The author of Hebrews says that “no creature is hidden” from God. Have you ever thought about this reality in relation to your time in Scripture? Have you ever thought about how you are not hidden from it, but it is revealing you to you as you interact with it? How does that impact you?

Have you felt discouraged about your time in Scripture recently or in the past? Describe what that was like.

Does Hebrews 4:12-13 impact anything you have believed or currently believe about the purpose and power of Scripture?

In light of this study, is there ever a fruitless or pointless time in God’s word?

Specific Revelation is the sister term to General Revelation. Specific revelation is the theological category of God’s communication with creation that is not general. Besides Scripture, what other examples of specific revelation can you think of?

As you dig into examples of specific revelation, think on two levels: how has God communicated universal specific revelation to his Church (see specific revelation definition at the top of this module), and then how he has specifically and specially revealed himself to you (i.e. Christian conversation- when you get clarity on a situation by processing with another person).

GROWING TOGETHER | Spiritual Friendship

Since you have now shared a few examples of your encounters with God in general and specific ways, is there a time you encountered God in community, perhaps even in this group? What was that experience like and how was it different from other encounters with God?

What are some ways you can experience spiritual community throughout your week?

How can your group encourage one another and hold each other accountable to participating in this spiritual community on a regular basis?

MOVING OUTWARD | Faith in Action

Schedule a time this week to go out in nature, maybe even with an unbelieving friend or family member. Intentionally reflect on what you observe in creation and voice that to the person you are with. Ask the Holy Spirit to open your eyes to what God is saying about himself as you spend time enjoying the things he made.