

#1 Considering the Nature and Purpose of Human Communication Video Outline

Quentin J. Schultze

1. Faith requires communication—and communication requires faith. Every act of communication is an act undertaken in the hope that it might be consummated with someone else.
2. Humans are called to be faithful caretakers and cultivators of God’s good Creation.
3. Humans are uniquely *responsible* for such caretaking—first to God.
4. The human *vocation* (ultimate calling) is following Jesus Christ as faithful caretakers of God’s world. Our calling is not first our jobs, professions, paid employment, and the like. Our calling is to follow the one who calls us, redeems us, and equips us for service.
5. Our *stations* are our specific work, relationships, volunteering, situations, and the like.
6. Humans, as God's caretakers, are *stewards of language*, including the relationships, understandings, and actions that are formed in and through their communication with God, each other, and themselves.
7. Human communication, like God’s communication, is *action* (symbolic or meaningful action), not merely “words.” We *do* it.
8. Like Adam, humans are called to “name” the Creation and culture with:
 - A. *Delight*;

In “Man Gave Names to All the Animals” from his *Slow Train Coming* album, singer-songwriter Bob Dylan captures this delight in the music as well as the lyrics.

He [Adam] saw an animal up on a hill
Chewing up so much grass until she was filled.
He saw milk comin' out but he didn't know how.
"Ah, think I'll call it a cow."
 - B. *Creativity/freedom* (as subcreators, under God); and
 - C. *Responsibility* (accountable ultimately to God).
9. Humans are called to carry out their caretaking with skillful excellence (caring *for* others), and heartfelt compassion (caring *about* others).

10. Humans are called to use the gift of communication to care *for* and *about* those in our three basic relationships—God, neighbor, and self. We are called to serve in this love triangle.

#2 Accepting the Gift of Communication Video Outline

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1. Human beings' communicative ability is ultimately a gift from God.
2. The gift of communication is evident:
 - A. In the DNA of the human species as an innate ability.
 - B. In human *culture* or "entire ways of life" (T.S. Eliot, *Notes Toward a Definition of Culture*).
3. As part of culture, human communication includes various social conventions—learned rules, rituals, rights, and obligations—that are developed and passed along from person to person and generation to generation.
4. The gift of communication—both innate and cultural—equips humans to communicate:
 - A. *Through time*, including with those departed people whose recorded messages (text, image, gesture, sound, etc.) still exist, and those whose messages exist only in our memories.
 - B. *Across space* (including with those we might never meet in person).
5. The ancient Roman orator Cicero (106-43 B.C.), focusing primarily on public speech, believed that humans communicate primarily for three purposes—to inform, to delight, and to persuade. Later, the influential rhetorician turned Christian theologian Augustine (circa 400 A.D.), affirmed these three human abilities in his groundbreaking book *De Doctrina Christiana* (*On Christian Teaching/Learning*).
6. The gift of human communication includes *metacommunication*—our ability to communicate about our communication. We are richly able to reflect on, evaluate, and alter our communication, including the moral dimensions of our discourse. Metacommunication helps us to ponder what is right as well as what is effective communication.
7. The gift of communication should instill in human hearts the *attitude of gratitude*—not indifference or thanklessness. Gratitude is the missing first chapter in communication textbooks.

#3 Listening as Attending to Reality Video Outline

Quentin J. Schultze

1. The most important communicative skill is *listening*.
2. Scripture addresses the primary importance of listening when it admonishes us to be “slow to speak and quick to listen” (James 1:19).
3. All humans are born into existing realities—into "givens" that we need to know and understand if we expect to be faithful, effective communicators.
4. From a Christian perspective, *listening* is best defined as *attending to reality*—paying attention to, and getting to know well, the way that things really are in the world.
5. There are at least four types of "reality" Christians should attend to:
 - A. Scripture (the Word of God)
 - B. Jesus Christ (the living, incarnate Word)
 - C. Creation (In the beginning....and it was good)
 - D. Culture (everything that exists because of human action upon Creation)
6. All types of human investigation and scholarly research—from marketing and audience studies to theoretically pure scientific investigation—are based on the biblical concept of listening.
7. Hebrew and Christian scriptures distinguish between *wise* and *foolish* people. Wise people attend to reality—they know what's going on. Foolish people naively assume that they know reality and then act blindly (the fool builds his house upon the sand). Foolish people are rash and impetuous. They regularly put their feet in her mouths.
8. Listening is a form of *obedience* or submission. When we listen carefully we discern reality; we let reality itself shape our view of the way things really are in the world. We "submit" to reality—not so that we become fully conformed to all of it, but so that we can discern it accurately before acting.
9. By listening carefully, we become *intimate* with reality—we know reality closely and personally. Reality for us is not then a matter of formal concepts or abstract thought, but personal, living knowledge. The Old Testament uses the same concept of intimacy to refer to sexual intimacy (so-and-so "knew" someone else, in the sense that they had sexual relations with them). The Hebrew word is *yada*’.

10. Being slow to speak and quick to listen helps us to get to know reality for the sake of performing the *three loves* to which we are called: the love of God, neighbor, and self. We cannot love in the abstract. We can love only personally.

#4 Communicating Under the Shadow of the Fall Video Outline

Quentin J. Schultze

1. What's wrong with our communication? What goes wrong when we communicate? Can we fix the problems?
2. The field of communication studies assumes that the problems are essentially *exterior* to human beings. There are "barriers" that get in the way of human beings' attempts to communicate well. There is nothing fundamentally wrong with human beings' communication that can't be fixed by better skills. This essentially humanistic perspective is foundational to the field.
3. But there are some cracks in the optimism promulgated in communication studies. For instance, scholars know that individual human beings selectively perceive reality, including others' communicative actions and intentions. Similarly, human beings selectively retain knowledge about others. *Selective perception* and *selective retention* suggest that there might be something intrinsic limiting how human beings approach communication.
4. For Christians, the fundamental problem is *sin*. Human beings intentionally as well as unintentionally disobey God. Communicators sometimes sin through:
 - A. *Acts of commission*—they intentionally engage in ridicule, lying, gossip and many other God-dishonoring communicative practices.
 - B. *Sins of omission*; for example, people fail to listen or to speak when they should, such as failing to offer words of hope and encouragement to those who need them.
5. Do human beings truly desire to know others and to be known? Or do human beings still replicate the naively self-serving responses of Adam and Eve to their own fall from grace? Do we hide from God, cover ourselves in embarrassment, and blame our neighbor for our own misdeeds? Humans both *cocoon* and *criticize*.
 - A. Evidence suggests from our own lives that we like to *cocoon*—to avoid communication in order to protect ourselves, by keeping others from knowing us as we really are. Transparency uncomfortably reveals our flaws as well as our strengths.
 - B. Human beings also like to *criticize* others in order to build up their own image of themselves. How comforting it is to know others don't meet our expectations! Much gossip is designed to build ourselves up by tearing others down.
6. One way of understanding the effect of the fall from grace on human beings is through a Freudian term, *ego*. We egocentrically tend to put ourselves first—to watch out for our own interests. We become selfish. We selfishly act like little gods who can do whatever we wish

without concern for God or others. We pretend that we ourselves can fully discern good and evil on our own terms.

7. So it was with the ancient Babylonians who built the tower of Babel into the heavens. In hopes of making a name for themselves, they constructed an impressive tower to elevate themselves into the heavens, supposedly near God. We all seek to *make a name for ourselves*.

#5 Imagining God in Communication Studies Video Outline

Quentin J. Schultze

1. In the field of communication studies, God is largely absent. God is assumed to be either silent, unlistenable (we cannot hear or comprehend Him), or so weak that His speech cannot influence the very world He created. Most Christians probably live with the same practical assumption that God is not communicatively present in their everyday lives.

2. In other words, God lacks speech *agency*. If he speaks, He speaks only to Himself, and He is unable to be an agent for creational, cultural, or human transformation.

3. The result is an academic field that views human communication as a *closed system* of humanly controllable factors. Scholars assume that what occurs in human communication is purely the product of what human beings do as communicators—except sometimes for the "weasel" box in some communication models that is labeled something like "all other factors." That type of box is a sign of human limitations if not also evidence for the existence of a sovereign God.

4. There are at least three ways of thinking about God's speech agency that would open up the field to significant views of God's speech agency.

A. The *Creator God* speaks, primarily through the Creation itself. The heavens declare the glory of God. The creation itself is evidence of God's power and goodness; all Creation was originally "good" and still speaks of the Creator's goodness. Gorgeous sunsets are love letters from the Creator.

B. *Jesus Christ*, the Word made flesh, speaks through the Scriptures, explains for us the mysteries of the Scriptures, and shows us how to communicate with God the Father through the power of the Holy Spirit.

C. Our *consciences* speak to us of God's moral law. Our very createdness gives us some godly moral direction. For instance, it is almost universally held among human beings that lying is morally improper.

5. None of these three venues for God's speech agency seems to be adequate evidence for scholars to include God in the study of communication. Why? Because faith is a matter of the heart as well as the mind and body. Faith includes:

A. *Affection*; it requires an *object* of our love (God), and

B. A *confession* of our love (a *confession* in the sense of both an admission of our need and a public expression or commitment to the object of our love).

The longing of human beings' hearts shapes what they will accept as evidence for God's speech agency.

6. In spite of all the related quandaries about how to "study" God's speech agency, Christian scholars can provide space for the possibility. Faithful communication researchers can remain open and hospitable to the God whose Creation itself depended on—and presumably still depends on—God's own faithful speech agency.

#6 Experiencing Trinitarian Grace Video Outline

Quentin J. Schultze

1. The Christian God is *Trinitarian*—a three-in-one God. The one God is three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This Trinitarian God is the God of communication and community. Perfect communication within the Godhead. Perfect community. Working together in perfect harmony.
2. This is incredibly difficult to comprehend. Augustine, one of the first Christians to write extensively about the Trinity, believed that human beings, made in the image and likeness of God, would indeed be perfect communicators apart from the fall from grace. Imagine that before the fall human beings could communicate perfectly with each other and with God even without having to use their bodies; they didn't have to speak or listen to be understood and to act in harmony. Augustine imagined the same for heaven, a community where the redeemed and God would share their thoughts and feelings without physical effort even though they would have bodies through the resurrection of the dead.
3. Scripture says that God is present when two or more believers are gathered. Suppose it's only two. If God is there, too, a "trinity" is complete.
4. The Trinity also helps us to understand:
 - A. Ourselves as *incarnate* communicators. We use our bodies on earth the same way Jesus did.
 - B. Our own bodily communication is inherently *multimedia*. We don't need modern technologies to be multi-sensory, multimedia creatures.
 - C. Three essential, relational purposes for communication. Using the gift of communication, we can *create*, *conciliate* (and reconcile), and *comfort*. God the Father creates; God the Son reconciles; and God the Spirit comforts.
5. Just as the Trinity itself is perfect community, through the gift of communication we can experience heavenly community even on earth. Our communication is not perfect, and neither is our community. But we can taste rich, meaningful, community in which we are flourishing together. We taste heaven on earth as *shalom*—justice and peace through right relations with God, our neighbors, and ourselves. Such shalom is not just the lack of conflict, but an abundant life in which we flourish in all three relationships. The gift of communication helps us to spread shalom by the grace of God—like signposts on earth that are pointing to heaven.
6. We are called to use the gift of communication to form such shalom in the *triangle of love*—loving God, neighbor, and self. Each part of the triangle is related to the other part. Whenever our communication and community suffer in one relationship, they will suffer in the other two as well. Our community life will be stunted and suffocating rather than rich and life-giving.

#7 Sharing Comedic Stories Video Outline

Quentin J. Schultze

1. Our lives as human beings are *parables of grace*. The story of each of our lives is filled with God's goodness, from the very fact that God created us to the fact that we can communicate with others and God.
2. Communication itself is grace in action. The fact that we can share our lives with others is remarkable, even winsomely magical. We tend to take communication for granted unless it breaks down. God's grace is evident in the fact that we can carry on as communicators without worrying during every second of every syllable, every gesture, and every text that our communication will completely fall apart.
3. The Gospel itself is a *comedy*—not in the sense of a joke or a one line quip, but in the sense of a comedic story, namely, the Good News that things will work out in the end despite our recurring sin and our everyday communicative ineptness. Without the Gospel, our lives are tragedy, for there is no hope for a positive outcome. Only death.
4. We can understand our lives within the framework of the Gospel—the Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Renewal that mark all of our individual lives as well as our relationships. Our lives are parables that point to the truth of the Gospel.
5. One aspect of the comedy in which we live is that our inability to communicate often saves us from not only miscommunication but also from sinful, arrogant communication. In the story of the Tower of Babel, the arrogant Babylonians tried to *make a name for themselves* by towering into the heavens. In response, God divided that arrogant culture into many languages so that their evil intents would not become unified, absolute action. God diluted their shared communicative power so that they would no longer be so universal and domineering. God preserved them by limiting their ability to communicate. Their lives, too, became parables of God's grace.
6. Without hope, our communication can seem so ineffective and self-defeating. We can become cynical, despondent, and even faithless. Why open our mouths if we might make a fool of ourselves?
7. Yet we can keep going, keep communicating, when we remind ourselves of God's grace in our midst. We can recall *God's promises*, and we can share our *testimonies of grace* by telling each other how God has kept us from other miscommunication and has equipped us to communicate beyond our merely human abilities.

8 Celebrating Our Well-Intentioned Blunders Video Outline

Quentin J. Schultze

1. We communicate by *intention*. We *desire* to connect, to engage, to purposely relate to others.
2. The field of communication studies has been significantly influenced by the behaviorist claim, "You cannot not communicate." Of course, even our unintentional "behaviors" provide a communicative message or "text" that others can "read." But communication requires shared understanding as a product of shared action; communication, as a distinct phenomenon, is not merely an unintended effect. The field of *nonverbal communication*, in particular, bases much of its research on such unintentional effects. Taken to an extreme, this view of communication as mere behavioral effect fails to address the role of intentionality in human action. It thereby overlooks the reality of *miscommunication* (when intentions do match understanding).
3. There is no perfect human communication. All human communication is less than fully complete and always partly flawed. Perfect mutual understanding is not possible.
4. It's also true that we fall repeatedly into discouraging communicative habits. Time after time we say, write, or text things we wish we had avoided. Our unintentional "behaviors" sometimes do reflect our wrongheaded or cold-hearted intentions.
5. The gap between the good Creation and our current fallenness is evident to those who have ears to hear and eyes to see. So is the gap between our current fallenness and the complete renewal of heaven and earth promised in Scripture. We taste heaven on earth, but the earth itself is not fully heaven. All of our communication and all of our relationships are marred. We are bound to misinterpret one another even when our intentions are most noble.
6. We study communication partly to become better skilled at it. But such skillfulness necessarily should include becoming more sensitive to intentionality and more skeptical of our tendency to interpret others' "messages" without knowing what they truly intended. In a biblical sense, we wrongly judge people by their exteriors rather than their hearts. And we are similarly judged.
7. Communicating in grace includes giving each other a fair degree of slack in the sloppy "system." Such slack is a humble way of celebrating the times that our intentions were noble even if the resulting effects were regrettable.

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#10 Advocating with God and for Neighbor Video Outline

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1. As followers of Jesus Christ, we receive high orders. We are called to employ the gift of communication in the service of God, neighbor, and ourselves. In a sense, our communicative abilities are on loan. We do not own them to employ or squander as we please.
2. Just as Jesus Christ advocates for us to the Father in heaven, we have an opportunity as faithful caretakers of Creation to become advocates for those who are in need in the present world. We can "vocate" for others, loaning our communicative abilities to those who need them. This is one of the most important communicative stations in life, and essential for those of us who consider ourselves to be faithful communicators.
3. We are called to loan our communicative abilities especially to the weak and the powerless. In communication terms, we can call such people the *voiceless* in church and society.
 - A. What characterizes the *voiceless*?
 - These are people who either do not have the ability to communicate well in given situations or do not have access to those that should hear their messages.
 - They may or may not be Christians.
 - They are exploited and unable to make known to others their experiences and their just claims.
 - B. Who are the *voiceless*?
 - Certainly the unborn fit this category.
 - Often, so do the physically and psychologically abused or disabled.
 - As do the religiously, socially, and politically oppressed people around the globe.
4. Serving these "neighbors" is a means of being living sacrifices. We offer our communication on behalf of others to the glory of God. Our communicative deeds then become fragrant *offerings*.
5. In the parable, the Good Samaritan was not planning to help the unfortunate guy who was beaten and robbed. The Samaritan simply "came upon" him. Then the Samaritan empathized *with* him and acted *for* him. Compassion led the Samaritan to use whatever skills he had to serve his neighbor as he would himself have wanted to be served.
6. Communicating on behalf of others is one of the most important neighborly acts for faithful communicators. It is peace and justice in communicative action.
7. The gift of communication is not our own to do with as we please. We are the benefactors, called to be living sacrifices who advocate for our neighbors in need, just as Jesus Christ advocates for us needy sinners to the Father in heaven.

#11 Taking Risks Wisely Video Outline

Quentin J. Schultze

1. Just as all communication is a matter of faith, all communication is *risky*. We can't guarantee any particular result. Even when we don't intend a negative outcome, our communication can cause damage, loss, and injury to others—emotionally, spiritually, and physically.

2. Communicating with others makes us, and them, *vulnerable*. So it's not surprising that we might opt out of potentially risky communication. We might not want to hear what we should hear, especially about ourselves. Similarly, we might avoid sensitive interactions that put our relationships at risk.

3. Dietrich Bonhoeffer in *The Cost of Discipleship* discusses "cheap grace," which we humans fall into when we fail to count the real costs of following Jesus Christ. Faithful communication will cost us relationally even though it is also an investment in relationships on behalf of the kingdom of God. Speaking the truth even in love is not a guarantee of effectiveness, success, popularity, or admiration. Truth-telling is a double-edged sword. It is far easier and often more pleasant simply to "go along" and "get along."

4. Two Kinds of Communicators

A. The *foolish communicator* fails to count the cost and consequently opts out or bumbles forward. A fool is a rash and impetuous communicator, quick to speak and slow to listen, quick to avoid and slow to confront. In communication, cheap grace always produces superficial relationships lacking mutually deep commitment while accepting real differences in personality and opinion. Cheap grace lacks a commitment to God and a respect for beneficial diversity.

B. The *wise communicator* counts the cost but nevertheless moves forward in faith. A wise communicator knows reality, accepts the costs of faithful communication, and engages the broken world with skill and compassion.

5. Keys to Wise Risk-Taking

A. Self-Control: One of the most important keys to taking risks wisely in communication is *self-control*. Real self-control is not an excuse for sins of omission. Nor is it a justification for failing to speak up appropriately when the situation calls for it. Self-control counteracts both our arrogance and our laziness as communicators. Self-control is a God-given *habit of the heart* that reminds us to review the intent and likely effect of our communication before we act.

B. Experience: Taking risks wisely, as self-controlled communicators, requires *experience*. By "trying out" the gift of communication we create a body of experience

that can inform future decisions about how to communicate faithfully in similar situations.

C. Christian Community: We benefit from the experience of others who share the same desire to take risks wisely rather than foolishly. Living in *Christian community* is especially important as a means for us to learn from one another how to be more effective and faithful communicators.

Speaking Only to Improve Upon the Silence Video Outline

Quentin J. Schultze

1. The biblical admonition to be "slow to speak and quick to listen" (James 1:19) is also a call to *value silence*. We tend to think that nothing good can happen unless we "act." Yet listening is a form of action; listening is proactive attention. Moreover, God has spoken, and his Word is already forming and sustaining the grace that we discover all around us. Finally, others might already be communicating better than we could, serving neighbors that we don't know how to serve. Perhaps our silence is an invitation for others to speak up.
2. In addition, our "being" itself can be one of our most authentic and effective forms of communication. St. Francis of Assisi is often quoted to the effect that Christians should "preach the Gospel always and, if necessary, use words." It's not entirely clear that St. Francis ever actually said this, but the idea is nevertheless trenchantly biblical wisdom about communication and relationships.
3. Silence is a gift that provides an opportunity for us to check our hearts. By holding back on our urge to speak, we can call on *silence as a hospitable context* for us to consider our own intentions. What do we desire? What are we trying to say—and why? Who are we most aiming to love if we speak up? God? Neighbor? Self? No one? Are we being a compassionate communicator?
4. Silence also provides a hospitable context for us to assess the level of excellence in our communicative skills. Are we truly being skillful if we speak up?
5. *Silence helps us attend to our good works*. Although we think of communication in terms of our own, internally generated good works, Scripture paints a significantly different picture. Ephesians 2:10, in particular, captures a cosmic view of human works in the context of God's own loving forethought. After presenting the Gospel in Eph. 2:1-9, the apostle Paul shares one of the greatest mysteries of the Christian faith: that we are God's *workmanship* (literally, God's "poetry" or "art"), created in Christ Jesus to do good works that *He prepared in advance* for us to accomplish. In other words, our good works—including communicative actions—are already set in motion for us to perform. Our first task is not so much to worry about our effectiveness but to humbly identify the opportunities that God lays before us. We are performers in God's own poetic symphony that announces the ongoing unfolding of the new heaven and the new earth.
6. One habit that prevents us from speaking only to improve upon the silence is *excessive busyness*. All of the old and new messaging technologies have their place in the kingdom of God, but our overuse if not misuse of them can create a frenetic psychological pace (perhaps a cultural ADD) that makes it hard for us to respect silence. *Multitasking* can be both a beneficial skill and a relational bane.
7. In the kingdom of God, less is often more. Why? Because less of *us* often means more of *God*. Less of *us* frequently means more of *others*. By humbling ourselves as silence-respecting

communicators, our lives can be richer and more rewarding recordings of God's symphony of good works.