

# 2.3 A Biblical Framework for Human Communication

## Aim

- To understand how God is a communicator
- To be acquainted with how the biblical framework for communication can be applied in life.

## Materials Required

- Pen and Paper
- A Spacious Room
- A Bible

## Procedure

- Divide the participants into medium sized groups depending on their number
- Ask them to make a news report of the creation story as found Genesis chapter 1 or 2, the focus point being God as a communicator.
- Let each group send one representative to read out their news report.

## Input

- Before, the world was a frightening one, without human love (Gen.1:2). This world held potential. When God came in, he brought light and every creation became centred in God who can be referred to as the breath sharer who was very close to creation.
- The Hebrew word for 'breath' is *ruah* which means 'wind' or 'spirit' which has power, causes life and sustains it.
- Our relationship should be that which is energizing and life giving from the example of God who seeks to relate, to be close and to share life.
- We can participate in the ongoing process of creation and enhance our transpersonal communication by:
  - Breathing into one's lung in case of an accident,
  - Giving a word of encouragement,
  - Giving our time to others (attending to others),
  - Expressing our love,
  - Seeking to relate,
  - Enabling others to attain their potential.
- Yahweh is described as a protective mother, hovering as the eagle does to her young ones (Dt. 32:11, Ex. 19: 4). The word *hover* refers to the characteristic flight pattern of an eagle extant in the biblical world. The eagle hangs in the air over its young in a fashion perceived as protective especially when the eaglets are learning to fly. Yahweh hovers over the dark and confused world, watching, noticing, ready to reach out with a saving action to his children.
- Genesis pictures a God who is a breath-sharer, an energizer. He attends to his people, enables them and seeks a close relationship with them. For us to be able to do this to others, psychological health is a factor. These are the characteristics of a healthy relationship. People who are psychologically healthy enable others to grow or fly alone. They become wind beneath their wings.

### 1. Creation as God's Spoken Word

- "God said let there be light" (Gn. 1:3). This shows that God is a communicator for the reason that he spoke a word which by itself is a medium of spoken communication.
- The word took away the darkness, named the sky, gathered great bodies of water, encouraged birds to fly, put life into seeds and flavoured the fruits, called and made man and woman in images of his divine nature.
- The poetic images of Genesis give us a framework for reflection on human communication in a biblical sense: In the beginning God's spirit hovered over the water. In the beginning, God reached out with a breath of encouragement to all that is helpless and bleak. In the beginning, God became intimate with his creation. In the beginning, God formed humanity in his own image. In the beginning, God communicated.

### 2. The Call to Human Communication

- We sometimes seem empty, unsure, without a clear vision or a strong purpose; we stumble against the darkness of broken promises and forgotten dreams. We ache for closeness and fear it at the same time. We yearn for a friend who will stay with us, who will know us and find us beautiful. What God did for creatures, creatures must do for each other. They have to be co-creators and breathe-sharers (man and woman).
- Man and woman are invited into a stance of attentiveness to all creation.

To let their spirits hover the earth and over one another's lives. They are invited to speak words that take away darkness. Therefore, they are invited to take part in breathing, hovering and speaking.

- Genesis acknowledges that creating is an act of passing on creative power. Empowerment is expressed by reproduction, growth and governance (Gn. 1:11-29). What God did for creatures, creatures must do for each other.

### 3. God's Faithfulness in Communication

- Israelites, in the Hebrew Scriptures, are engaged in mutual communication with God, stories of their ongoing struggle to be attentive, to energize one another and to speak words true to their hearts. They tell the story of God's faithful communication and of women of biblical times.
- The communication never stopped. Yahweh communicated with the people and revealed more of the divine to them. Sometimes the message was angry, other times it was tender. There was pain, triumph, correction and encouragement. He always assured them of his continuous presence. He was not a love - you - then - leave - you God. Through Ruth God spoke a word of faithfulness, through Esther he gave a message of courage and through Judith an expression of inner strength. Job brought a new understanding of trials and suffering. Jeremiah reminded the people that they needed to be moulded like clay. Hosea showed God's undying love in spite of people's unfaithfulness. Isaiah gave them a sense of hope for the future. There were healing words, grieving words and even challenging words. A word to console, a word to forgive, in short, there was always a word.

### 4. Another Beginning and a New Word

- The evangelist John saw Jesus as the ultimate communication of God. The notion of divine communication through Jesus was so real to John that he identified him simply as the 'word', the utterance of God (Jn 1:1, 9, 14).
- Through Jesus God met many people: sinners, the sick...the list is endless.
- Through the same Jesus, God listened, talked, felt, confronted, cared, touched, self-disclosed and became involved in all of the expressions of personal communication that are associated with intimacy.
- "Love one another as I have loved you" (Jn 15:12) continue the communication process; grow close to one another as I have grown to you.
- Like the word that breathed life and became flesh, Christians are called to breathe life into chaos and to speak a word of life to those seeking meaning.

### 5. The Application of the Biblical Vision of Life

How does the biblical vision of communication relate to life?

Effective communication is a style of talking and behaving that sustains relationships over time. Some of the characteristics of this relationship include the ability to:

- Recognize and express feelings,
- Reflect accurately on one's behaviour,
- Listen and be attentive,
- Care genuinely for others,
- Self-disclose appropriately,
- Be at home with one self,
- Verbalize thoughts and feelings clearly,
- Manage conflict effectively.

Effective communication is focused on relationships that move towards friendship and intimacy.

## Review

1. When God came in he brought light and every creation became centred in God who can be referred to as the breathe sharer.
2. To breathe into another with our own breath is symbolic of sharing our life, of becoming involved in a relationship that is at once energizing and life giving.
3. Yahweh hovers over the dark and confused world, watching, noticing, ready to reach out with a saving action to his children.
4. We can participate in the ongoing process of creation and enhance our transpersonal communication by:
  - a. Breathing into one's lung in case of an accident
  - b. Giving a word of encouragement
  - c. Giving an hour of time (attending to others)
  - d. An expression of love
  - e. Seeking to relate
  - f. enabling
5. Israelites, in the Hebrew Scriptures, are engaged in mutual communication with God
6. Through Jesus God met many people; sinners, the sick...the list is endless.
7. Through the same Jesus, God listened, talked, felt, confronted, cared, touched, self-disclosed and became involved in all of the expressions of personal communication that are associated with intimacy.
8. Effective communication is a style of talking and behaving that sustains relationships over time.
9. To love each other is a way to continue the communication process, to grow close to each other.



## Reflection

Just as the dark and empty world was pulled toward the light by an attentive, speaking God, so too, the daughters and sons of God move toward each other and into the light with attentive gestures and caring words. They promote or hinder one another's growth along the way by the manner in which they interact.

## Relevant Skills

Make a list of 10 persons with whom you have to interact on a daily basis. Evaluate your relationship with these persons around you in the biblical perspective of communication.

## Resources

[www.christianitytoday.com](http://www.christianitytoday.com)

## References

Raymond Brown, Joseph Fitzmeyer and Roland Murphy, editors. *The Jerome Biblical Commentary* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1968

Ferder, Fran. *Word Made Flesh: Scripture, Psychology and Human Communication*. Notre Dame: Ave Maria Press, 1986.