

# YOUR GOD IS STILL TOO SMALL

## Chapter 3

### *Bio-linguistics and the Communicating God*

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*If we are not hearing from God,  
It is not his fault!*

Have you ever watched a court reporter? Most court reporters use a stenotype machine that allows them to type at least 200 words per minute using a keyboard that is quite different than a typical QWERTY keyboard. The stenotype machine has comparatively fewer letters, missing the letters “C,” “I,” “J,” “M,” “N,” “Q,” “V,” “X,” and “Y.” It has no ability to type in lower case letters, every stroke giving only capital forms. Unlike an ordinary keyboard, you do not type one letter at a time. Multiple letters are typed at once, each accounting for a syllabic sound.



A typical layout of a stenotype machine

The way the machine works is based on the pronunciation of the English language. Modern English has about 40 consonants and vowel sounds that work in various combinations to make the words and sounds in everyday speech. This area of study is called “phonology,” and is one of four major branches of linguistic studies. On the surface, it seems to be nothing of great accord. We speak, we hear, and we pronounce words generally the way most of those around us do. In actuality, speaking is an amazing feat!

Scholars believe that there are forty muscles involved in speaking. Ranging from your chest, larynx, throat, mouth, and face, these muscles all move as necessary to articulate each syllable, without any conscious effort by the speaker. The number of movements involved is a bit staggering. One scholar has estimated that there are 225 muscle activations for *each second* of speech!<sup>1</sup> The rules our minds use for selecting the sounds we have in our language are not conscious rules, they are buried deep within our minds. For example, if I went fishing yesterday, then I say “I *fished*.” The “d” at the end of the word that put “fish” into the past tense is pronounced by most as a “t.” If I went climbing yesterday, then I would say, “I *climbed*.” There the past tense “d” is pronounced like a “d.” Does the brain make

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a conscientious decision each time one speaks these words? No. Most people make this pronunciation shift automatically, not even able to state the rule of when the “d” sounds like a “t” and when it sounds like a “d.”

As early as 1863, British biologist Thomas H. Huxley famously wrote that,

The possession of speech is the grand distinctive character of man.<sup>2</sup>

Huxley made a compelling point. Humans invent words, speak words, understand words, and think with words. Marks (writing) and sounds (speech) have meanings that humans grasp immediately without really thinking about it. It is in this sense that the ancient Greeks used the word *logos* (λογος). *Logos* is rightly translated “word,” but it also means “reason” or “rationale.” Our reasoning and thinking is done in our minds in words! Try to think of anything without your mind vocalizing the word! It rarely happens in conscious thought. It is in this sense that Nobel laureate Salvador Luria said,

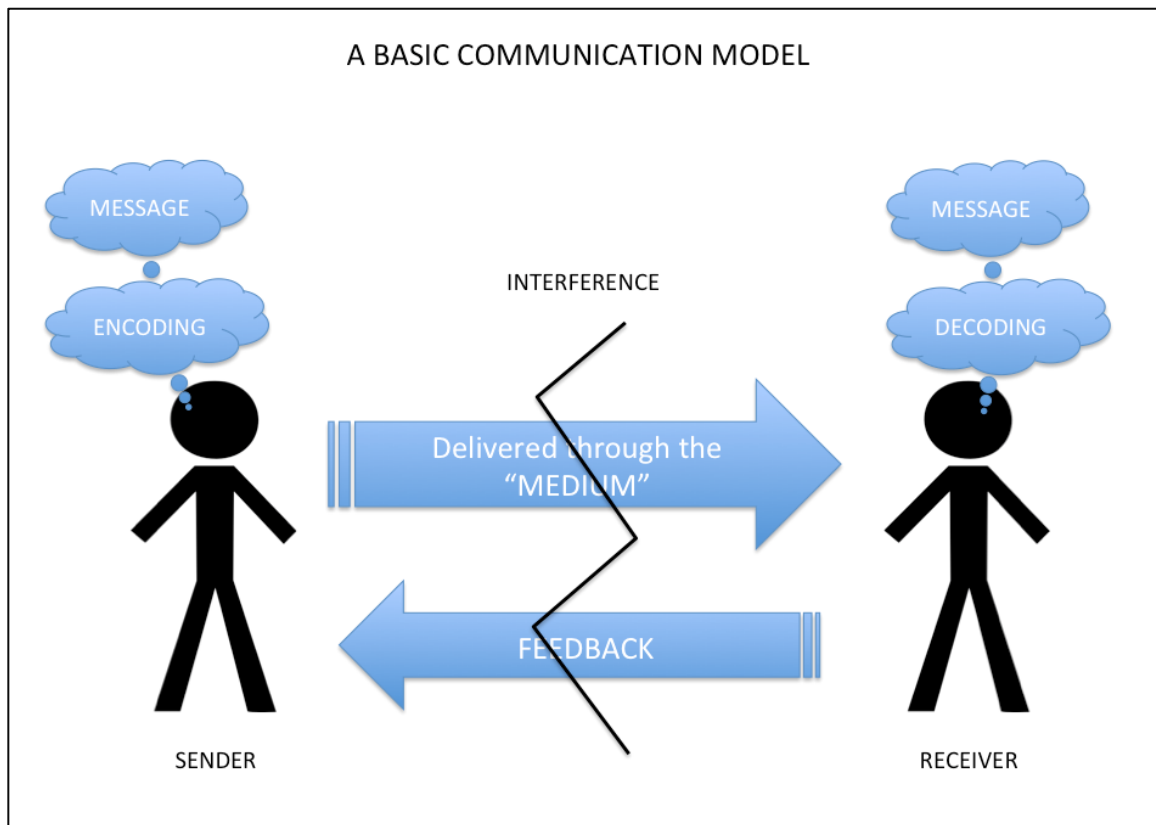
Human language is the special faculty through which all conscious human activity is filtered.<sup>3</sup>

Beginning in the 1950’s and carrying forward to today, there has been a cognitive revolution in which the science of understanding how people think and process language has grown exponentially. The pronunciation exercise discussed earlier is only the tip of the iceberg in the issues involved. Three-year-old children who cannot yet add numbers readily use mathematic-like adding rules with words and sentences.

As scholars struggled to understand the acquisition of speech by humans, a number of theories emerged. In the 1950’s, B. F. Skinner advocated a behaviorist approach. He taught that children learned language and its rules by conditioning, being around others who used language. This view was not readily accepted for long. MIT guru Noam Chomsky promulgated a very different view, which is frequently labeled a “nativist” view of language acquisition. Chomsky believed that language is uniquely human and that within the human brain there was some ability to acquire and use language that was innate in a child from birth. Today, a majority of scholars seem to hold to Chomsky’s opinions, in some form or another. Still, there are notable scholars who offer other explanations for language acquisition and usage. This issue is too complicated to get full scholastic consensus at this point in time.

Why is language so important to people? Is it simply because we think in words? Of course not. There is a core desire in most people to understand others and to be understood by others. Consider the massive proliferation of social media in this

Internet age. Facebook, Email, Four Square, Twitter, and many other computer and smart phone applications are the center of billions of dollars in commerce that arise from the drive of people to communicate with each other. For decades, scholars have discussed the process of communication. Scholars produce models to break down the elements of communication for further understanding and study. Typical models set out two people for simplicity's sake. One person is the "sender" who has a "message" he or she wishes to convey to another called a "receiver." The sender determines how to put the message into words, commonly called a process of "encoding." The encoded message is then sent to a recipient through a "medium." The recipient receives the message through the medium and decides what it means by "decoding" it. The recipient offers "feedback," acknowledging the received message with verbal responses, with nods of the head, and even with an occasional quizzical expression. Scholars study each aspect of communication, including possible interference that can disturb the message as it is transmitted. While communication models and studies include "non-verbal" communication, most communication occurs through language, either in print, speech, or an electronic form.



In summary, words form the basis of *how we think* as well as *how we interact with others*. Accordingly, it is fair to ask questions of how language and communication figure into our understanding of and interactions with God. We can examine our own interactive communications with God, both as recipient of *his messages* as well as senders of our own. We are recipients when we hear from God. We offer feedback and are also senders as we pray to him. We examine our faith in this area to see whether our God is still too small.

## GOD AS SENDER

Some people are amazed that I consider the Bible to be God's word for people – that I consider it a divine revelation. To some people, this view seems passé and out of date, or at least uneducated. Many scholastic minded people have dissected the Bible and subjected each minute slice to a microscopic examination before dismissing it as a nice collection of ideas, stories of fiction, and loosely related realities. Many of these people disbelieve the Bible as divine revelation with as much evangelical zeal for their disbelief as any believer who advocates on behalf of divine Scripture. The Bible is certainly open for scrutiny. An intelligent examination of the Bible is called for, even within its own pages. I like the King James Version of 2 Timothy 2:15,

Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

Behind any scrutiny of the Bible, however, lies another question first: Is it fair to expect that God can and would seek to communicate to people?

The case for a communicating God seems a fair, common sense deduction. God in the true sense of one large enough to make the stars and galaxies shrink in comparison to him (chapter one), one who is large enough to know and understand the quarks of the universe (chapter two), certainly has the *power* to communicate. This is not a feat that humans have mastered, but is beyond the skill set of the Deity! We dare not say that the master of all matter struggles with English, Greek, Hebrew, or any of the other estimated 6,000 languages on earth. So if it is not a question of ability, then why might the Great God choose not to communicate with humanity?

Perhaps we might think that in light of the immensity of the universe, humanity holds little interest to God. An extension of this reasoning might assert that among the 7 billion people on the planet, the life of one versus another holds little interest to God. This line of reasoning can sound almost pious in asserting that it magnifies God to such a degree that he thinks of many other lofty and important

things besides the life of one human or another. Yet, the truth is the opposite. To consider God incapable of caring about even the smallest, least noticeable person on the planet earth, in light of his grand understanding of all matter, is to relegate him to a status of smallness. This was part of the issue covered in our examination of Psalm 8 in chapter one. It might not diminish him in stature (“he could *if he wanted to*”), but it certainly diminishes him in caring! To say that God could *if he wanted to*, but then assume he simply has no such desires, is to unfairly think of God as small in his love and attention!

An interesting contrast between the religion of ancient Israel with its neighbors and the culture of its age centers on this very point. For many, the gods had little desire to communicate with humanity save the rare occasion where someone had captivated a god for some reason. In Mesopotamian legends, man was “created” by the gods to do their work that was tiring them out. Many people had to yell, shout, cavort, dance, and more to get the attentions of the gods. We see this many times in ancient literature including the Bible. In the Old Testament, when Elijah challenged the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel, we read about Baal’s prophets crying out loud for hours and, still not getting Baal’s attention, cutting themselves with swords and lances “as was their custom” continuing to rave on while “no one [*i.e.*, no god] answered; no one paid attention” (1 Kings 18:26-29). Similarly in the New Testament, Jesus talked about Gentiles who prayed by “heaping up empty phrases” thinking “they will be heard for their many words” (Matt. 6:7). Not so with the God of the Bible. He is not living his own life occasionally bothered enough by people to communicate. In striking contrast to all the other religions, the God of the Bible reached out desiring to communicate.

If we consider that God has both the power and the desire to communicate with humanity, we can then return to the communication model to see if it helps us probe the communicating God as sender.

A sender begins with a message he or she wishes to convey and then encodes the message, putting it into words or a language as needed for the medium.

#### ENCODING:

As I type these words, I am taking the thoughts I wish to convey, and choosing words and sentences that seem to best fit my ideas. I am using English as my language and so these words and sentences carry forth the encoding I have chosen. I could have encoded my message using different words. In this sense I could have written the last sentence as: “Alternatively, a comparable set of linguistic sound symbols could have born out my intended ideas.” I chose instead to use words that I thought more clearly conveyed my message. I also could have chosen

to encode my message in Spanish, but I'm not sure "*Yo debí de haber usado palabras diferentes*" would mean a lot to my target audience.

In encoding, God has many options on how he might communicate to humans. Before we even get to language, some might think God would use some awesome BIG GOD approach like communicating with ESP or some mind control. That is not the way of humanity, however. As science continues to prove, we are in our core, a verbal race. Our minds and conscious thoughts are hard wired for language. We could fairly expect, then, God to use language in communicating with man. It is what we are prepared to hear and understand.

There are 6,000 languages on earth today, and an untold number in the history of mankind. Within all those languages there are innumerable words to be chosen to convey an idea. Those words can set out propositional truths, they can form poetic verse, or they can even tell stories. If the goal of God is to communicate with people, then one would expect his encoding to be understandable to the people receiving it. This will be of importance when we consider the responsibility and function of the recipients in decoding the message.

#### MEDIUM:

Once we have considered that God would choose some manner of encoding, we next consider the medium that God used. When scholars discuss mediums, the main ones used in history have been the oral medium and the written medium. (Over the last few decades the "electronic medium" has arisen, but it is so relatively new in comparison with the age of man that we are leaving it out of this discussion.) The oral medium is most common and easiest, but carries with it the frailties of message distortion as it relies heavily upon memories. The written medium has greater longevity in a reliable transmission, but it still ends up with errors in copying and assimilating messages over time.

The God of the Bible used both kinds of older mediums, the oral and the written, to communicate his messages. Repeatedly in the Bible, we read of God either speaking, with a "Thus saith the LORD..." or commanding a prophet to record his words. As Paul spoke of the Old Testament, he called it "the oracles of God" (Rom. 3:2 – "the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God"). Paul was writing in that letter to believers in Rome who were both Jew and Gentile. The Gentile believers in Paul's day certainly were familiar with the phrase "oracle of God." There were well known oracles throughout the ancient world where one might try to seek a word or oracle of special knowledge from a god. The gods were not always willing to respond with a word; however, when the payment was enough, the god's prophet or voice piece usually came up with something short and

ambiguous as an answer. A well-known source of an oracle of god was at the Greek temple at Delphi. Reading these messages as recorded by the Greek historian Herodotus is a very different read than what we have in the Bible!

An important point to consider when examining the medium, is one of worship. Our worship always needs to be of the sender – of God Almighty. We do not worship the Bible, it is merely a medium through which God is communicating to man. That makes the Bible immensely important as something we are to listen to and understand. But the Bible should never be confused for the sender, and it should never be our object of worship!

God's message in the Bible was communicated within a historical framework. It is within that historical framework that we enter as we work on decoding the Bible.

#### DECODING:

We move in the decoding process from the sender (God) to the recipients (people). The first recipients were actual hearers of the message. Even a light study of the Bible shows few who heard actually accepted the messages for what they were. Repeatedly, the prophets were rejected as false babblers. The people were constantly wanting God to communicate on their own terms, and not his own. A familiar story from the New Testament involved Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead (John 11). Some believed Jesus as Messiah following this, but many did not. They went to the authorities trying to get Jesus in trouble. Consider in this light the gospel writer Luke's recounting of Jesus telling a parable about a man named Lazarus and an unnamed rich man. This parable stands out as the only recorded parable where one of the characters was named. Of course the name Jesus chose in the parable is the very same name of the man Jesus raised from the dead.

In the parable, the rich man has an easy life and poor Lazarus a difficult one. Both men die, the rich man suffering torment in Hell while Lazarus enjoys the bounty of heaven. The rich man cries out for father Abraham to send someone back from death to warn his brothers lest they wind up with the same fate. Abraham explained the brothers had "Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them." The rich man admitted his brothers would not listen to them, but would surely listen if someone came back from the dead. Jesus responded, "If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead" (Luke 16:19-25). Of course, this message echoes heavily in the Scriptures where neither the resurrection of Lazarus nor the resurrection of Jesus was heard by those already deaf to Scripture.

Part of decoding, then, is accepting who the sender is and distinguishing the sender from the medium. In other words, to adequately decode the message of God, we need to see the Bible and its prophets as a medium God used to convey his message, rather than mere humans who themselves devised the message.

After we understand the medium for the medium, rather than confusing it with the sender, we then need to decode the medium. This means that we consider the interference that may have occurred, which in this case is often a copying error or other transmission issue. We work to purify the message from such interference. Scholars who do this work in the Bible are amazing. They are constantly going over thousands of manuscripts to make sure they can reconstruct the best original text to be used in the decoding process. We then have a next step of placing the historical language into a modern one. For the words and phrases this is more easily accomplished. Strong teams of translators work for decades to make and keep translations in modern dialects to enable individuals to read and understand the words of Scripture.

Even reading and understanding a translated word, however, is not the fullest way to decode and capture the original message. Often times the historical context needs some additional information to help place it into modern minds. A reference to “June Cleaver” today might mean something to the crowd old enough to have seen “Leave it to Beaver.” But to many too young for that show, such a reference would be lost. Far away geography is often not understood, even where it is important in understanding one point or another. Ancient manners of writing and speaking, forms of poetry, organizing ideas, and other style issues also frequently get involved in proper decoding in light of the medium used.

While there can be many issues that are difficult and require significant study, a core principle of God wanting to communicate is getting his core message across in simple, unambiguous terms. This message, in the core teaching of Scripture, is not hard for one to decode. Scripture readily teaches what many term “orthodoxy.” Most anyone reading can quickly glean the following message:

- God made man to be in fellowship with God (Gen. 1-2).
- Man sinned, and drove a wedge between himself and God (Gen. 3).
- Without God overcoming man’s sin in some manner consistent with his character, that division between God and man would be permanent (Rom. 5:12-14).
- In a miracle, God became incarnate and lived a perfect life as Jesus Messiah.
- Jesus was crucified taking on the responsibilities and sins of humanity (Rom. 3:21-26).



- After dying, Jesus was resurrected for eternity, appearing on earth as a testimony to the power of God before ascending into heaven (1 Cor. 15:3-28).
- God sends his Holy Spirit to move people and teach people these truths as set out in Scripture. Without such conviction from the Spirit, these truths seem foolish (Jn. 14-16; 1 Cor. 2:6-16).
- Those who place their trust and faith in Jesus's death are accorded the righteousness of Christ (Rom. 3:27-30; Eph. 2:8-10).
- God will come again in Jesus, transforming this world and changing God's people into immortality (1 Cor. 15:50-57).

None of these concepts is difficult to glean from Scripture. They are each clearly communicated and few who ascribe to the Bible as God's authority dispute these.

In the encoding process, we have a need to both understand the clear messages, and also the obligation to deal with more difficult sections of Scripture and decode historical matters properly.

#### FEEDBACK:

Our feedback to God takes several forms. Certainly, our lives reflect our responses to his message. How we live indicates whether we are "getting it" or not. James points out that while we cannot show one another the actual faith in our hearts, our actions most certainly show that faith.

In one particular way worth noting, our feedback takes a special form where we become senders of our own message to God as recipient. At this point in communication theory, we have moved from one sender to two, and the "speech" has become a "dialogue" or a two-way conversation. This is what prayer is about. We are responding to a conversation that God has started!

While Matthew 6 has the most commonly recited words of the Lord's Prayer, that prayer is also given in Luke 11. The Luke passage has a prelude that places the prayer into an interesting context. The Luke

#### **SIN AS INTERFERENCE**

In our communication model, we inserted "interference" that can muddle or confuse a message. One source of interference we discussed in this chapter was the transmission issues with the Biblical record. Another independent source of interference in our hearing God, is the sin in our own lives. In this sense, Psalm 66:16-20 affirms that if we regard sin in our hearts, it affects our prayers. This is sensible in that our prayers are feedback to God's message. Our sin is like a television turned up excessively loud while we are trying to have an important conversation. To the degree that we regard sin in our hearts, we will not hear God well, nor will our responses be proper.

passage begins with Jesus ending a time of personal prayer. One of his disciples then asked him to teach them to pray. Jesus then taught them with the Lord's Prayer.

Before we consider the teaching of Jesus on this matter, we should consider several points. First, the Great God is not really in *need* of man's prayers in the sense that he does not know what we are thinking. Of course, he knows every thought and word before we form it. Psalm 139:1-4 makes this point clearly:

O Lord, you have searched me and known me!  
You know when I sit down and when I rise up;  
you discern my thoughts from afar.  
You search out my path and my lying down  
and are acquainted with all my ways.  
Even before a word is on my tongue,  
behold, O Lord, you know it altogether.

Jesus made the same point in the prologue to his prayer recorded in Matthew 6:7-9,

And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. Pray then like this:

Matthew used an interesting Greek word that gets translated as "empty words." The Greek is *battalogo* (βαππαλογο), and it refers to one who is "babbling on and on." Jesus knew and taught that prayer was not an effort at getting God's attention so one might inform God of needs that God might not be aware of, or might have overlooked. God knows our needs. Prayer is still important though. It is humanity's feedback. It is a responsive dialogue between two in relationship. This becomes clear as we look at the prayer.

The prayer has six clauses, the first three clauses about God, and the last three petitions for man.

*Clause 1:* "Our Father in heaven."

The prayer begins intimately and majestically in two words, if we were hearing this in Hebrew or Aramaic. The first word translates into English as "Our Father." It recognizes the intimacy of relationship between a faithful person and God. The second word translates into English as "in heaven." In this, we see not an ordinary father, but the majestic greatness of the one we call Father. So the prayer begins

recognizing both the grandeur of God and the relationship between the personal God and man.

*Clause 2:* “Hallowed be your name.”

With this clause, the prayer moves directly into praise. It aids us here to culturally understand that one’s name at that time was more than a mere label. One’s name stood for one’s character, history, and actions. Jesus taught us to pray praise to God for who he is and what he does.

*Clause 3:* “Your kingdom come, your will be done.”

The final clause about God is one of purpose. The dialogue seeks God’s will and kingdom, aligning the one praying with God’s will. These three clauses then end with the phrase “on earth as it is in heaven.” The structure of this comment can apply equally to each of the earlier clauses. God’s name is to be hallowed on earth as it is in heaven, his kingdom is to come on earth as it is in heaven, and his will is to be done on earth as it is in heaven. After these three clauses about God, the prayer turns to the petitions of the praying believer.

*Clause 4:* “Give us this day our daily bread.”

In this first request, we see God recognized as the source of the most basic needs. In our 21<sup>st</sup> century efficiency mentality, we might rather pray, “give us this year our yearly bread,” yet Jesus teaches the prayer as one of daily need. We are to regularly seek God in prayer. The dialogue between God and man is not a rare thing; it is a regular occurrence. Paul told the church at Thessalonica to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thess. 5:17). The earliest record we have of the church outside the New Testament taught believers to say the Lord’s Prayer three times a day!<sup>4</sup>

#### **Jesus’s Turn on a Hebrew Prayer**

An ancient Hebrew prayer, the *Kaddish*, that dates from the diaspora Jews in Babylonia, bears a resemblance to the beginning verses of Jesus’s prayer. The *Kaddish* can be translated:

*Exalted and hallowed be His great name  
In the world which he created according to his  
will*

*May he let his kingdom rule in your lifetime  
And in your days, and in the lifetime of the  
whole household of Israel, speedily and soon  
Praise be his great name from eternity to  
eternity.*

*And to this say, Amen.*

While the content of the two prayers are very similar, the Lord’s Prayer has a major distinction. While the Jewish prayer is one of praise to God as a third party, Jesus uses a direct discourse and dialogue. The Jewish prayer says “hallowed be his name,” While Jesus says “hallowed be *your* name.” Jesus’s prayer was a conversation in relationship, not simply a declaration to the world.

*Clause 5:* “Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.”

In this clause, we see the recognition of human shortcoming and inability to live as we should before a Holy God. Our lives are in his debt, and we are to recognize that and seek his forgiveness. Part of this reflection on the divine forgiveness should also bear influence on the believer. We are not simply praying for our own needs, we are seeking to change how we are toward others.

This phrase is especially important in light of this book’s theme. Digressing from the communication point briefly, we must note that anyone who fails to forgive someone who has wronged him or her, is worshipping a God who is too small. One of several things is remiss. Possibly one fails to see the greatness of God in his supreme holiness, which leaves one not realizing his or her great need for forgiveness. Alternatively, one might fail to understand that God has acted to forgive human sin. It is as if sin is too big for God’s forgiveness, or beyond God’s care or concern. Any of those options are not full and fair portrayals of the Great and Loving God.

*Clause 6:* “And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”

As the prayer comes to a close, there is a renewed recognition of relationship, with God as leader and deliverer. The disciple is not able to handle the temptations and evil on his or her own. One is to look regularly in prayer to the Father for aid in this regard. Of course, this also assumes that the believer wants to refrain from evil.

The Lord’s Prayer is an expression of trust in a close relationship, where the role of a Holy God is not lost, but is reinforced. One of the remarkable things about the prayer is its brevity. The prayer is short and to the point, with only six basic clauses. It is not that Jesus was against lengthy prayers. We know from Luke 6:12 that he would go off in the night and pray all night long. His relationship with the Father was one of dialogue. Jesus was even known to repeat his prayers, as we read about in Matthew 26:39-44.

MAN AS SENDER:

As Luke wrote on the Lord’s Prayer, he put it into a very important context. Luke 11:1-4 is the Lord’s Prayer. It is followed by a parable where Jesus taught that a friend would open the door at midnight to help another in need (Luke 11:5-8). Luke then spent four verses putting forward Jesus’s encouragement for people to pray. The parable nestled between Jesus’s teaching on prayer is important. The parable focuses on the character of God himself, as *he receives* our requests! If we

place this parable into a communication model, the praying person is the sender and God is the receiver. The parable teaches one to pray confidently and expectantly! Pray with assurance, not because of our mental attitude when we pray, but because there is a receiver who can and will hear our prayers. God *will* respond to our prayers, they do not get lost in the ether! God's answer and response may be "Yes." It may be "No." It may even be, "Not yet!" But we can pray with assurance that the message we encode will be received.

We need to be careful as we pray, not to confuse God with a genie who will answer and grant our wishes if only we ask right. Our calling is to pray, to be in dialogue, to be before God regularly with all aspects of our day and our needs. Our confidence is that he will answer in accordance with his will and his kingdom. The goal is not fulfilling our shortsighted vision. The goal is, as set out in the Lord's Prayer, his kingdom and his will.

Paul goes even further as he noted that sometimes we do not know how to encode our messages fully! Even as creatures of language, sometimes we do not have the words we need or want. Here Paul explained that God, who knows our needs and thoughts, will himself intercede in the encoding, "with groans too deep for words" (Rom. 8:26). Our inadequacies as communicators will not stop God from understanding or reacting appropriately.

## CONCLUSION

We are a verbal people. There is something hard-wired in our brain to receive and send ideas in language. Our thoughts are based in language. The same passage of Scripture that speaks of God making man in his image, is a passage where God *speaks* the world into existence (Gen. 1, esp. verse 26). If God is to speak to humanity, then the FIRST task of humanity should be to listen and try to understand what God is saying. Once one is in a relationship with God, the speech is never one-way. Listening to God is still very important, but it is not enough. The believer in relationship with God is called into dialogue.

Here is where the hard-wired brain makes humanity unique. We are hard wired to communicate, but we are primarily hard wired to seek Him and early on humanity tried feeble, really, REALLY small ways of thinking of God. In most ancient cultures, man tried to relate and understand God in the feeblest ways, with shrines and images concocted from the mind of man. Over time, God continued to reveal himself in verbal communication to man. God warned man against trying to put God into some image or idol, always leaving man with words to understand God and to relate to him.

We can fast forward from those ancient times to the present. We live in an age with communication and science at humanity's zenith. For many modern people, they think of scripture as the work of a primitive people. In their modern mind, there is no room or need for a God. These people see "god" as so small as to be non-existent. As small as they make God, they inversely make themselves large. Many believe it makes more sense to evaluate the likelihood of a god within the confines of the rules of physics and math that they understand, rather than stretch their minds to the limits to consider that much beyond what our brains can "know" rests the realm of a creator that could create the world we see, who could literally create time and space. Rather than recognizing something impossibly greater, they choose to believe that something can come from nothing, terms that in themselves, are so small in description they couldn't possibly describe what God can do. They speak only in terms of our understanding of matter. In this, their actions are as feeble as early people trying to describe Him through shrines and images.

Earlier we referenced the statement by Salvador Luria:

Human language is the special faculty through which all conscious human activity is filtered.

Consider the importance of both revelation and prayer in that light. How are we to really understand God without hearing and reading his words? Is it through our logical minds alone? Similarly, how are we to process and express our praise and worship as well as our desire for his will in our life, if we fail to use words? By praying to him, we are using our conscious minds and adjusting them and aligning them to his will. We are also expressing ourselves in relationship, growing in that conscious effort to both understand and be understood. This is a major part of daily life for a believer.

If we fail to pray out of a feeling that our prayers simply bounce off the ceiling unanswered, or if we fail to pray out of busyness or apathy, then we are not truly responding to the Great God who seeks out communication with those whom he has made able to communicate in a special way, distinct from all other beings natural to earth. Our failure to pray is a major symptom that our God is too small!

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<sup>1</sup> Macneilage, Peter, *The Origin of Speech*, (Oxford 2010), at 4.

<sup>2</sup> Huxley, T. H., *Man's Place in Nature* (1863). An interesting review of this book and its quote is found in *The Anthropological Review*, May 1863 beginning at page 107.

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<sup>3</sup> This comment came in a lecture given in 1976 at an American Association for the Advancement of Science meeting. The lecture text can be found at: <http://profiles.nlm.nih.gov/ps/access/QLBBHR.ocr>.

<sup>4</sup> See the *Didache* at Chapter 8. Different scholars date the *Didache* as early as 50 AD to 125 AD. For more, see the paper in the Church History section of [www.Biblical-Literacy.com](http://www.Biblical-Literacy.com).

### POINTS FOR HOME SUPPLEMENT

1. *“If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead”* (Luke 16:31).

If we are not listening to God, then we will not hear him. We will not hear and acknowledge even the resurrection of one from the dead, whether that one is Lazarus or Jesus Christ himself. We may say, “But it is not our fault, God should speak to us in the manner we expect!” However, that is not the way of speech nor is it the role of man before a Great God. We listen for HIM to speak in HIS wisdom in the manner HE chooses.

2. *“Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth”* (2 Tim. 2:15).

We do the Lord a disservice if we consider only the basics of Scripture. God has delivered a communication that deserves our best study and research, as we prayerfully try to glean insight from him that reflects on God, the world, the human condition, how we live in the present, and what we hope for in the future.

3. *“Your Father knows what you need before you ask him”* (Matt. 6:8).

We are not praying because God needs to hear us. We are praying because we need to talk to God!