

## Lesson Two

*Review from Lesson One:* When Joshua and the Israelites were confronted with the Gibeonite situation, they used the elements of what we're calling the information complex in order to make a decision about how to assess, and interact with, the Gibeonites. Briefly review each of the elements of the information complex as seen in the Gibeonite situation and also review how those elements would be manifested today.

*The Problem:* Most Christians believe that they need information in order to make decisions, and their attitudes and actions demonstrate that they believe that God's Word is "one of many" sources of information at their disposal for decision making. Many have not thought through what the Bible claims for itself as its proper role in relationship to information.

*Why the Problem Persists in Churches:* Information seems safe and measurable when compared to revelation. In addition, we know that God gave us the ability to process information so we know this ability is from Him, but we're not sure to what extent the Lord would want us to use this ability.

*The Underlying Assumptions as Expressed in Everyday Terms:*

1. God gave us the ability to weigh factors and information. If He gave us that ability, doesn't that authorize us to do it?
2. I don't know how much weight I should give to my own personal experience or the findings of experts who have studied situations like I am now facing.
3. There are promises and other things in the Bible that I have never personally experienced; but I do know what has happened in my own life.
4. I'm fairly certain that the people in my congregation would be uncomfortable with using just the Bible to make a collective decision. Wouldn't it be wise, in something like a church budget decision, to consult other sources of information? That's what we've always done in the past.
5. What should I do when Bible "advice" seems like it is not practical? I know people who have used certain books or methods and they worked very well. They didn't exactly oppose the Bible's teachings but I can't say they're Biblical. Besides, the Bible doesn't seem to cover a lot of today's scenarios and situations.

*Background Reading before teaching this lesson:*

Read Acts 16:6-10. There are two main points that must be emphasized in teaching this lesson. One is that all revelation has as its foundation not just rules and regulations, nor just historical and cultural aspects, but a Personality.

Though the main scripture passages we'll be studying in Lesson Two will be from the Old Testament, Acts 16:6-10 demonstrates that the Lord has preferences and does Himself provide a basis on which He expects us to make decisions and assessments. Even when we have the best of motives (like Joshua's desire to be merciful—see 1

Samuel chapter 15 for another example of this) and we propose worthy actions, there are times that the Lord has other intentions.

Additionally, although we often think of God as Authority and Power, we should also keep in mind that He is Personality and Will as well.

Also, in preparation for this lesson read Exodus 23:20-33. According to this passage, on what basis should the people have dealt with the Gibeonites? What conclusions should the people have made about the relative strength of the inhabitants of the Promised Land? How did the Lord make plain to them elements of His personality and specific will? How did He differentiate between elements of information and revelation?

*The Scripture Passage:* Exodus 13:17 – 14:31.

*The Lesson:*

- 1) Read aloud the passage.
- 2) With the students, make a list of factors that Pharaoh used as a basis for his actions, a list of factors the people mentioned, and a list of factors Moses and God used.
- 3) In each case, which factors were from the information complex? Which were revealed by God?
- 4) We can generalize from this passage that the clash\* between information and revelation necessitates four things.
  - A. First, information must be **differentiated** from revelation. What God says and commands is not just another form of information. Revelation isn't information (though it may be informational), and information isn't revelation. In any situation, a believer must earnestly seek the will of God, what He has revealed. Moses acknowledged that the Egyptian army wasn't imaginary: what the people saw was real and dangerous. But he knew that God had promised victory in this situation and could confidently tell them that what their eyes informed them of, would actually cease to exist – "The Egyptians you see today you will never see again."
  - B. Secondly, information must be **subordinated** to revelation. What the Israelites saw and felt, had to be viewed as an inferior representation of the reality before them. They made comparisons – they believed that slavery in Egypt was better than being pursued by the Egyptian army and killed by them. But God knew better. When Israel saw the Egyptians lying dead on the shore (v. 30), they had to acknowledge the superiority of God's power – not only

His power to kill their enemies, but also His power to correctly represent reality.

- C. Thirdly, information must always be **contexted** within revelation. A context is a framework within which something is enclosed. The context is determinative; what is inside doesn't determine anything. For instance, the people would have used their senses (specifically their sense of sight) in order to walk through the Red Sea. But all their emotions, all their experience about being surrounded by walls of water, all their logic along with all their senses had to be contexted within the framework of what God had revealed. He said He would fight for them, and He did. They needed only to be still – and that meant mental stillness. Everything they would have known from the information complex was of limited use, and had to be contexted within the greater and more powerful framework of what God had said about the situation.
- D. Finally, revelation must be **utilized**. We have seen that information is of limited use. However, revelation has a function that information can never achieve. Whereas information can give us certain data (using our eyes and logic and experience to walk in a straight line, for instance), revelation has the unique ability to unite the seen and the unseen. It is a link or index between the two aspects of reality. Whereas information only gives us context-able data about this world, revelation tells us things our eyes could not possibly see, and tells us things we could not possibly know otherwise. Revelation can not only analyze the present, but correctly represent the past and predict the future.

*Questions for discussion with class*

1. In what way does committed Bible study enable a person to differentiate information from revelation? For someone like a new Christian who is not well-read in the Bible, what would be the role of Bible classes and mentors? What would be the result of Bible classes and mentors who do not **differentiate** between information and revelation?
2. If someone were to tell you that our ability to use information was given to us by God and thus should be used freely and in the same way as revelation, how could you use 1 Corinthians 6:12-20 to show that God has set limits on – or asked us to **subordinate**-- abilities that He gave us?
3. Look at Exodus 23:20-33. Think about how the 12 spies set out on the mission of espionage. What elements of the information complex did they have to rely on in order to travel? How do we know the 12 spies relied at least in part on revelation in order to go on the mission? What, therefore, would you conclude about the role of the information complex in the way they traveled and then reported the information? How should they have **contexted** information and revelation?

4. What does 1 Corinthians 1:18 through chapter 2 say about the way that revelation is superior to information? How does this passage demonstrate the way that revelation connects the seen to the unseen?
5. In what situations of your daily life would you say that relying upon the information complex is permissible? Describe such a situation. How would you differentiate, subordinate, and context such information?

\*Of course information does not always conflict with revelation. For instance, the Israelites would have personally experienced the crossing of the Red Sea, would have had a consensus about what happened, would have done some serious risk assessment and might even have felt sympathetic when they saw so many dead Egyptian soldiers. But we see clearly in this case how revelation – what God had said would happen – was perfectly united (and powerfully causative!) in its relationship to information in the physical world.