

## Lesson Eight

*Review from Previous Lesson:* As we have progressed on the 3-D model through those indices that link the unseen to the seen, we have demonstrated that the *Holy Spirit* is foundational in His work in bringing the purposes and power of God into the material world where humanity operates. He is the basis of all *revelation*, which we defined as the expression of God's will and purposes in ways that we can access and understand. Valid Biblical *faith* is built on revelation, and is not just hopefulness, we learned; but a way that we can express and participate in the will of God.

*The Problem:* We've seen how human involvement increases in the indexing levels: the Holy Spirit was autonomous, but He began to include mankind in indexing, as "men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Spirit" (2 Peter 1:21.) We as humans increase our level of participation as we exercise faith. But we have greatly underestimated the impact of language as a way that we express that faith, and so we do not give proper attention to the role of our use of language.

*Why the problem persists in churches:* We are afraid of not seeming "practical" in the way we talk about the use of language. We understand and can define such things as gossip, false teaching, and praise – but we can feel uncomfortable in seeing our use of language as something that is linking us to the unseen realm of God.

### *Underlying Assumptions As Expressed in Everyday Language*

1. I have no idea of how I could personally participate in linking the seen to the unseen.
2. Why would someone say that our use of language is so crucial? After all, aren't our actions what really matter? If I act morally and ethically, isn't that the most important?
3. I never thought of the way I talk as an index.
4. Talking about language as "symbolic" is outside my comfort zone.

*Background Reading Before Teaching This Lesson:* Joshua and Caleb (Deuteronomy 1: 19-31), Rahab's account in Joshua 2:1-39, and the story of David in 1 Samuel 17. As you read, list the "facts" of each situation and write down verses that apply. (For instance, the "facts" that Joshua and Caleb observed included: people, cities, strength, walls, Anakites.) Then show how Joshua, Caleb, Rahab and David manipulated symbols concerning (spoke differently about) these things than did the other 10 spies, the people in Jericho, and the Israelite army facing Goliath. Be prepared with your list before you come to teach the class so that you can help the other class members to find examples of the manipulation of symbols.

### *The Lesson*

1. God's triune (three-part, or triadic) nature is something that is reflected in reality which He creates and maintains. He operates on the unseen side as the Father, and

came here to the unseen side as the Son, and we are able to know all about both of them through the indexing Spirit, who has always functioned as a conveyer of information and comfort and advocacy for human beings. So, a triadic Deity created a triadic reality. Should we be surprised that His main medium of communication with us, language, is also trinitarian or triadic? Even our grammar demonstrates this: nouns and direct objects are linked by verbs.

2. Let us dispense immediately with any notion that language somehow “evolved,” as sociologists would tell us, from primitive signs and grunts to a sophisticated method of interchange. We can dispense with that, because it was with very specific language that God told Adam: “You are free to eat of any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die” (Gen 2:16-17). Now, if the first humans were incapable of developed language, they could pantomime “do not eat this,” but could never cannot pantomime “you are free,” nor the word “knowledge,” nor “good” nor “evil.” And in a world that did not know evil, that did not know death, no non-verbal precursor to words could convey such concepts. Only words could do it: Language did not evolve, God taught it to Adam.
3. Let’s return to the 3-D model of reality and look at the highest level of indexing or linking the unseen to the seen. Here, at the highest level of indices that link us to the unseen world, is the greatest power and responsibility of human will and participation. We speak of the *manipulation of symbols* as the index that lies atop the foundation of the action of the Holy Spirit, the linking of revelation, and the indexing of our faith as a bridge between the two worlds. (The word “manipulation” is used circumspectly because of some negative connotations given to it by our culture; but its simple meaning is that of using and arranging elements at hand to achieve a purpose. A clockmaker manipulates his tools and the workings of the clock to repair it, for example; a computer operator manipulates the keys of his machine to produce a finished product.)
4. Let’s take an example from the life of the apostle Paul. Before he became a Christian, he actively persecuted and even condemned to death many faithful followers of Christ. That personal history was a fact; and the way he talked about it, or manipulated the symbols he used to represent it through his words, was always based on what he knew from God was true about it (and not just how he felt about it). Let’s look at how that played out in Paul’s life. Jesus told him on the road to Damascus that he was persecuting the Lord personally (Acts 9:5). Based on that revelation and the faith that emerged from it, Paul would later use both the actions of his life and his words—both symbols—to demonstrate that fact and interpret it (see 1 Timothy 1:12-16 and Philippians 3:4-8.)
5. All faithful people of the Bible knew how to manipulate symbols – use their speech and language – to represent the facts of their experience. For instance, Joshua and Caleb, and the other ten spies who went with them into the land of Canaan, were all confronted by the same icons of the power and might of the

- land. But Joshua and Caleb chose to symbolize them as gifts God had already promised them. They manipulated those symbols in such a way as to call for immediate action to take the land as God had commanded. The others not only symbolized the land differently, they were able to so persuasively manipulate the linguistic symbols (by what they said) as to put such fear into all the rest of the thousands of people that they refused to take the land.
6. Another example: when the young boy David entered the Valley of Elah to take provisions to his brothers who were in Saul's army, David saw the same visual fact as his brothers had for 40 days and nights, the immensity of Goliath. He heard the same oral fact of the taunting of Goliath. These were sensory (visual and auditory) icons. But he symbolized them differently: not as a source of fear but as a challenge to God Himself. He took those symbols and used them to link to other times in his life when God had rescued him from the paw of the lion and the paw of the bear, and proceeded fearlessly out to kill Goliath.
  7. Another example: Rahab recounted in Joshua chapter two how the entire city of Jericho was quaking in fear because of what God had done for the Israelites 40 years before in parting the Red Sea and defeating local kings. But she manipulated those symbols differently than others in her city: she took the risk of aiding and abetting the spies who came to her. For that, she is listed as a heroine of faith.
  8. The concept of the stacked indices culminating in human action, in linking the unseen world to the seen, through the manipulation of symbols gives added meaning to such things as baptism and the Lord's Supper. Baptism is a symbol, a representation of a fact that exists in the mind of God, of how He wants to cleanse us; as well as a participation in the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. Partaking of the elements of the Lord's Supper is truly what Scripture calls a proclamation (representation) of the death of Jesus until He returns. In these, God is pleased to allow us to participate in a marvelous process that began with the linking of the Holy Spirit, the giving of revelation, the production and building of faith, and finally the manipulation of symbols that ties us sweetly and securely to the unseen realm where God's power is supreme.

### *Questions for Discussion with Class*

1. Give an example of a simple sentence that demonstrates our language is triadic in structure.
2. How do we know that language did not “evolve”?
3. What did you learn about the use of language from the story of Joshua and Caleb?
4. What did you learn about the use of language from Rahab?
5. What did you learn about the use of language from David?

6. From the Biblical examples of Joshua, Caleb, Rahab and David, what would you say the response of God is to language that is built on faith, revelation, and the Holy Spirit?
7. What do you see in James 2:26 that demonstrates why the manipulation of symbols is essential?
8. Can you think of a time during the past week in which you have manipulated symbols through your speech in a way that did not link the unseen to the seen?
9. What role does your language play in demonstrating truth? How could it be said that the 10 spies of Deuteronomy 1 were not truthful in saying what they said? How does this example illustrate the difference between information and revelation?

*“Yeah, but..... “*

What about the times that God says one thing about reality, and even though I manipulate symbols through my language to agree with Him, but still what He’s said doesn’t match up with what I’m experiencing? In other words, what about the times that His words don’t match my experience?