

Lesson 7

Being Faithful

Introduction:

Jesus continues His Sermon on the Mount teaching the family values in the Kingdom of God. He couples His next topic adultery . . . with divorce.

Reading the Scripture:

Being Faithful The Sermon on the Mount Matthew 5:27-32

Scripture excerpts from "Follow Me: A Message from God"

You have heard that it was said, 'YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY'; but I say to you, that everyone who looks on a woman to lust for her has committed adultery with her already in his heart. And if your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out, and throw it from you;¹ for it is better for you that one of the parts of your body perish, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off, and throw it from you;² for it is better for you that one of the parts of your body perish, than for your whole body to go into hell. And it was said, 'WHOEVER SENDS HIS WIFE AWAY, LET HIM GIVE HER A CERTIFICATE OF DIVORCE'; but I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except for the cause of unchastity, makes her commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

Context:

Many people today do not have a good biblical understanding of what adultery is. Most would simply say that adultery is, "when a married person engages in sexual relations with another who is not their spouse." While this is true, it certainly doesn't express the full essence of what Jesus is talking about.

The Hebrew word for adultery is "na'aph" and it means to **break wedlock**. And we see that this is the focus of Jesus' teaching as He directly links the subject of adultery with **divorce**, which is also a breaking of wedlock. Adultery involves more than just improper sexual relations. It constitutes breaking a **covenant relationship**.

So before adultery can occur a "covenant relationship" must already be in place. Covenant relationships come in several types with marriage being one of them. The Bible also speaks of people being in covenant with God; the Jewish people in the Mosaic Covenant and Christians in the New Covenant.³ Covenants are comprised of several elements, as we shall discover in the next lesson of this book.

¹ **If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out, and throw it from you.** "Stop envying". (Desiring what is not yours)

² **If your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off, and throw it from you.** "Stop stealing". (Taking what is not yours)

³ The Hebrew name for the "New Covenant" is "Brit Hadashah" ("new" meaning "Renew, Repair, Restore" – i.e. **Jeremiah 31:31-34**, "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts," and **Ezekiel 36:26-27**, "I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.")

Marriage is common and generally understood by everyone. So Jesus uses adultery in marriage to illustrate how covenants are broken and that breaking **any** covenant is equivalent to adultery. He outlines the steps to committing adultery so they serve as warning signs to the disciples.

Just as adultery occurs in a marital relationship it can also occur in a spiritual relationship. When adultery occurs in a spiritual relationship it is called **apostasy**, falling away or idolatry. Three prophets, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Hosea, declared that the Israelites were committing adultery concerning their covenant with God. And in the book of James, Christians are accused of the same thing. *You **adulteresses**, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. (James 4:4)* Let's take a closer look at the **covenant**⁴ of marriage and how wedlock is broken.

Marriage is a **public** statement of **oneness**. It is the act of a man and a woman becoming one physically, emotionally and spiritually. It involves an agreement or covenant between the two. They pledge their lives to one another, living together in union and showing favor towards one another. Marriage requires vows, oaths or promises to be given and God is witness to them.

Divorce is also a public statement that there is a separation or **cutting** apart of the two lives⁵ that were joined in marriage. It is the **final** act of breaking of wedlock or a breaking of oneness. It indicates that the couple will not dwell together in union or show favor towards one another after the divorce occurs.

When a married person engages in sexual relations with another who is not their spouse that person is committing adultery. According to Webster's Dictionary the word adulterate means: to corrupt, debase or make **impure** by the addition of a foreign or inferior substance. So when one of the spouses engages in sexual intercourse with someone besides their marriage partner the marriage becomes mixed or impure. Since the marriage no longer exists in its original state there are **grounds** for divorce. However, the marriage does not have to end in divorce if the offended party **forgives** the other and the couple is **reconciled** to one another. Their marriage has been restored and there has been no breaking of wedlock by divorce.

According to Jesus, adultery also occurs upon **remarriage** after a divorce for a reason other than unchastity. In other words, the new marriage will be made corrupt, debased and impure by the **addition** of a foreign or inferior substance. Remember, if adultery was the grounds for the divorce the marriage had **already** been corrupted, debased and made impure. Jesus said, "And it was said, 'WHOEVER SENDS HIS WIFE AWAY, LET HIM GIVE HER A CERTIFICATE OF DIVORCE'; but I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except for the cause of unchastity, makes her commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery."⁶ "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced from her husband commits adultery." (Luke 16:18, Mark 10:11)

⁴ **Covenant.** See article on page 7 ("[Relationship to God](#)") for a full explanation.

⁵ "**cutting** apart of the two lives": i.e. Genesis 15:1-18, ". . . When the sun had gone down and it was dark, behold, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces. On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram . . ." and Jeremiah 34:18, "And the men who transgressed my covenant and did not keep the terms of the covenant that they made before me, I will make them like the calf that they cut in two and passed between in parts."

⁶ Matthew 18:8-9

The Pharisees were well aware of the role that divorce plays in the issue of adultery and questioned Jesus on it. They wanted to know whether it was lawful for a man to divorce his wife at all. A full account of Jesus' reply is found in Mark 10:3-12. *"And He answered and said to them, 'What did Moses command you?' And they said, 'Moses permitted a man TO WRITE A CERTIFICATE OF DIVORCE AND SEND her AWAY.'*

NOTE: Under the Law of Moses there are four grounds for divorce. The first three are neglecting to provide 1) **food**, 2) **clothing** and 3) conjugal **love** and the fourth is committing adultery. These four obligations parallel the vows exchanged by couples in Jewish marriages. By the way, these four were common in most societies during Jesus' day.

But Jesus said to them, 'Because of your hardness of heart he wrote you this commandment. But from the beginning of creation, God MADE THEM MALE AND FEMALE. FOR THIS CAUSE A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH; consequently they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate.' And in the house the disciples began questioning Him about this again. And He said to them, 'Whoever divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her; and if she herself divorces her husband and marries another man, she is committing adultery.'" The Apostle Paul reinforces this view in 1 Corinthians 7:10-16.

An interesting point arose when the scribes and Pharisees brought a woman caught in the act of adultery⁷ to Jesus. What was this act of adultery? Most believe that she was a married woman caught in the act of having sexual relations with a man. If this were the case why wasn't the man stoned as well, since it was the law in Israel?⁸ The most likely scenario is this. The woman probably divorced her first husband and was in the process of marrying her second husband, who was a single man. She was caught in the act of committing adultery at the wedding ceremony when she was being remarried.

The second part of this story is equally interesting. Let's look at what happened and how Jesus handled it.

"Now in the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women; what then do you say?" They were saying this, testing Him, so that they might have grounds for accusing Him. But Jesus stooped down and with His finger wrote on the ground. (John 8:5-6)

Perhaps Jesus wrote Jeremiah 9:2, which God spoke through the prophet concerning all of Israel. *For all of them are adulterers, an assembly of treacherous men. (Jeremiah 9:2)*

But when they persisted in asking Him, He straightened up, and said to them, "He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her." Again He stooped down and wrote on the ground. (John 8:7-8)

Then perhaps Jesus wrote Psalm 32:1, which was written by King David after committing adultery with Bathsheba. *How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered!*

When they heard it, they began to go out one by one, beginning with the older ones, and He was left alone, and the woman, where she was, in the center of the court. Straightening up,

⁷ John 8:1-11

⁸ Deuteronomy 22:22 "If a man is found lying with a married woman, then both of them shall die, the man who lay with the woman, and the woman; thus you shall purge the evil from Israel."

Jesus said to her, "Woman, where are they? Did no one condemn you?" She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said, "I do not condemn you, either. Go. From now on sin no more." (John 8:9-11)

The transition that Jesus makes from the issue of murder to adultery is seamless. It appears that He completely changes topics but He doesn't. He has been dealing with the root issue of both anger and adultery, which is covetousness, desiring something that **doesn't** belong to you. Jesus connects covetousness to adultery because it is this desire towards another that leads to divorce, the breaking of wedlock or oneness.

The Commands:

- ❖ If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out, and throw it from you.
- ❖ If your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off, and throw it from you.

Group Discussion:

1. If you have been married what are some of the vows that you made?
2. What are some possible repercussions of breaking wedlock?

The Lesson:

The introduction to this lesson covered some of the legal issues involving adultery. But Jesus wants His disciples to see the root causes for it. The story of King David and Bathsheba shed light on these causes and contrast the moral and legal issues of adultery. Following is a summary of their story.

King David watched Bathsheba, a married woman bathe. The Law did not forbid this. Then David initiated physical contact with her. Then they had sexual intercourse and she became pregnant. Adulterous sexual relations were forbidden under the Law. David tried to hide the consequences of his sin, the unborn child. If he couldn't find a way out of the predicament Bathsheba would be shamed, more than likely divorced and possibly stoned to death.

David hatched a plan to have Bathsheba's husband' Uriah, who was a commander in the army and away at war, return to Jerusalem. David wanted Uriah to have sexual relations with Bathsheba while he was at home on leave from the army so that it would appear that the unborn child was theirs. However, Uriah didn't have sexual relations with Bathsheba. David realized that if Uriah divorced Bathsheba, everyone would know that he was committing adultery if he married her.

So David devised a second plan. He sent Uriah back to war and instructed another commander to allow Uriah to be killed in the fighting. This gave the appearance that David didn't really murder him. It also appeared that David had the right to marry Bathsheba since her husband died and she had not been divorced. However, God knew the intentions of David's heart and brought judgment against him.

As He did with the issue of murder, Jesus discloses the pattern of **steps** that lead to divorce, the final act of breaking wedlock. Each of the steps also serves as a warning. Then Jesus issues instructions for overcoming the temptation at each step. Committing adultery is about being unfaithful to one's vows. And it all starts with a look.

In Matthew 5:28, Jesus says that everyone who looks on a woman to lust for her has committed adultery with her already in his heart. He places the responsibility for the sin of adultery squarely on the shoulders of the man. If a man is married or was married and divorced from his wife, then

he should not be looking to take another woman as his wife in the first place. Secondly, it is the single man's duty to find out whether a woman is married or was married and divorced before he pursues her. He is free to choose from women who have never been married or those whose spouse's have died.

The temptation to commit the sin of adultery comes through the lust of the eyes. It is the sin of envy or covetousness, desiring something or someone an individual is not entitled to. It is the way that one person **looks** at another. In our society we have a term for that look. We say that, "his or her eyes are green with envy." Jesus gives His disciples the solution for preventing the lustful look. He commands them to pluck out their right eye and throw it away if it offends them. This Aramaic idiom simply means, "**Stop envying or coveting.**"

Jesus goes on to say, "*If your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off, and throw it from you; for it is better for you that one of the parts of your body perish, than for your whole body to go into hell.*" The second step towards committing adultery involves taking possession of another person. Usually this happens through inappropriate **touching**. This is a lust of the flesh. Jesus commands His disciples to cut off their right hand if it offends them. The idiom means "**stop stealing.**" Most people on the path to adultery think they are having illicit sexual encounters with a person other than their spouse. They have never considered themselves envious people or thieves.

The final step and warning is adulterous sexual **intercourse**. Jesus demands that His disciples not to divorce their spouses for any reason other than infidelity in the relationship. In that case the spouse has already violated the marriage covenant by becoming one with another person.

Reading the Scripture:

Jesus Teaches on Divorce Matthew 19:1-12, Mark 10:1-12

Scripture excerpts from "Follow Me: A Message from God"

And it came about that when Jesus had finished these words, He went from there to the region of Judea, and beyond the Jordan; and great multitudes followed Him, and He healed them there. Crowds gathered around Him again, and, according to His custom, He once more began to teach them. And some Pharisees came to Him, testing Him, and saying, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any cause at all?" And He answered and said, "Have you not read, that He who created them from the beginning MADE THEM MALE AND FEMALE⁹, and said, 'FOR THIS CAUSE A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER, AND SHALL CLEAVE TO HIS WIFE; AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH'?¹⁰ Consequently they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate." They said to Him, "Why then did Moses command to GIVE HER A CERTIFICATE OF DIVORCE AND SEND her AWAY?"¹¹ He said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart, Moses permitted you to divorce your wives; but from the beginning it has not been this way. And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery." And in the house the disciples began questioning Him about this again. And He said to them, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her; and if she herself divorces her

⁹ MADE THEM MALE AND FEMALE. *Genesis 1:27*

¹⁰ 'FOR THIS CAUSE A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER, AND SHALL CLEAVE TO HIS WIFE; AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH?'. *Genesis 2:24*

¹¹ GIVE HER A CERTIFICATE OF DIVORCE AND SEND her AWAY? *Deuteronomy 24:1-4*

husband and marries another man, she is committing adultery.” The disciples said to Him, “If the relationship of the man with his wife is like this, it is better not to marry.” But He said to them, “Not all men can accept this statement, but only those to whom it has been given. For there are eunuchs who were born that way from their mother's womb; and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men; and there are also eunuchs who made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. He who is able to accept this, let him accept it.”

Spiritual adultery with God follows the same path. In the first step a person **looks** at or desires other gods. In the second he **serves** them. The third step he **prays** to them. This act is called apostasy meaning a falling away from or separating from. In the Scriptures we are told the Israel played the harlot. They went after foreign gods and served them.

God was displeased with Israel and even gave the northern kingdom a writ of divorce.¹² Yet He has remained a faithful husband to them by not taking another people . . . waiting patiently for the day when they would return to Him. God has shown Himself to be a faithful husband. In 2 Timothy 2:11-13, Paul writes about the faithfulness of the Lord Jesus Christ. *“It is a trustworthy statement: For if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him; If we endure, we shall also reign with Him; If we deny Him, He also will deny us; If we are faithless, He remains faithful; for He cannot deny Himself.”* The way of love is faithfulness in relationships.

Group Discussion:

3. How does Jesus' teaching on adultery contrast with our society's views?

The Point of the Lesson:

Avoid the lustful look.

¹² Jeremiah 3:8, *“She saw that for all the adulteries of that faithless one, Israel, I had sent her away with a decree of divorce. Yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear, but she too went and played the whore.”* (Jeremiah 3:1, 6-15, 17, 19-23, 25 and the book of Hosea also deals extensively with this subject.)

Relationship to God

It's popular in preaching the gospel or sermons to tell people that they **must** have a personal relationship with God. *But what does that mean?* For example, what is the nature of the relationship, how does it get started, what expectations are there in the relationship and how does it work in a practical sense? These are all valid questions that race through a person's mind but usually go unanswered.

The name of the relationship is **covenant** and it is the basis for Biblical Faith. All denominations of Christians acknowledge this covenant relationship, yet many forget about it and what it means when it comes to arguing their particular point of view. Without knowledge of what a covenant is and how its parts work, much of what it means to be a Christian is difficult to understand. So let's take a closer look at the key concept of covenant.

The Covenant Relationship

An individual becomes a Christian by entering into a covenant with God. The Biblical name of that covenant is the "New Covenant"¹³ and is referenced by Scripture in Jeremiah 31:31-34. *"Behold, days are coming," declares the LORD, 'when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them,' declares the LORD. 'But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,' declares the LORD, 'I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, "Know the LORD," for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,' declares the LORD, 'for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.'"*

A covenant in its simplest terms is an **agreement** or **promise** between two or more parties. It is derived from the Hebrew word "*berith*", which means to divide or cut in two. It has come to mean, "*a coming together*" which signifies a mutual undertaking between two or more parties each binding himself to fulfill obligations. It does not in and of itself contain the idea of joint obligation. It mostly signifies an obligation undertaken by a single person.

Covenant is the way that **God has chosen** to enter into relationship with men. There are several of these covenants recorded in the Bible. Seven predominant ones are the: Adamic (Genesis 1:28-29; 2:15; 3:5, 14-15, 21), Noahic (Genesis 6:18; 9:1-17), Abrahamic (Genesis 12:1-3; Genesis 15:4-21; Genesis 17:6-14; Deuteronomy 30:1-20), Mosaic (Exodus 19:5-6; Deuteronomy 26:17-18; Exodus 31:12-18), Palestinian (Deuteronomy 28:1, 15; 30:19), Davidic (1 Samuel 16:13; 2 Samuel 7:11-18; 1 Chronicles 17:10-14; Psalm 89:34-37; Jeremiah 33:20-21) and the New (meaning "Renew, Repair, Restore" – Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:26-27).

Covenants have been used since ancient times as a way for people to come together. For example, friends would pledge their friendship forever, enemies would make peace and become friends, and conquerors brought the conquered into submission and worked out a friendly relationship with them.

¹³ The Hebrew name for this covenant is "Brit Hadashah".

The key word in all these covenant agreements is **friend**. Our modern-day usage of the word friend has been corrupted. In most cases we should be using the term, “acquaintance”. The word friend, according to the dictionary, comes from prehistoric times and has a root meaning of “to love”. A friend is one who is attached to another by esteem or affection, or one that is not hostile, or one that is of the same nation, party or group. The most common form of covenant that people participate in today is **marriage**.

Covenants are entered into by representatives who become functionally one and are bound together in an unbreakable treaty. They are in fact **exchanging** their lives with one another (*Jesus, “I lay down my life . . . on my own accord”* John 10:17-18 and *His Followers, “whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple”* – John 13:34-35; Matthew 16:24-25; Luke 14:26-27). The representatives can be the actual people engaged in the covenant themselves or they can also represent their families, organizations, nations, the unborn or those who wish to be part of it.

Covenants are formally binding agreements much like are modern day contracts however they differ in five primary ways:

1. A covenant is initiated based on the concept of friendship, whereas a contract is initiated to achieve an agreement.
2. A covenant is based on trust between the parties. (i.e. “I know you care for me.”) A contract is based on distrust for one another.
3. A covenant is based on unlimited responsibility. (i.e. “I will do everything in my power to bless you.”) A contract is based on limited liabilities.
4. A covenant cannot be broken if new circumstances occur, whereas a contract can be voided by mutual consent.
5. A covenant is made before impartial witnesses, whereas a contract needs only the agreement of the two participating parties.

The Parts of a Covenant

Every covenant, including the New Covenant has four basic parts:

1. The Choice
2. The Law or terms of the agreement
3. The Sacrifice
4. The Sign which is “a memorial” or “in remembrance of”

The Choice

The “Choice” consists of an **invitation** or proposal by one party to another to come into a covenant agreement. The stronger one usually makes the invitation or proposal since he has more to offer. The weaker one accepts the offer. This is why we historically see a man proposing marriage to a woman.

In the New Covenant, God invites or proposes that an individual enter into a covenant relationship with Him. The invitation comes through the preaching of the gospel or as some would say by declaring the “good news” of Jesus Christ. It is God calling out to people to come to Him. When a person **hears** this invitation it is what the Scripture refers to as being

“called” by God. Once a person **accepts** the invitation and enters into the New Covenant the terms **chosen**¹⁴ or elect apply to him.

The choice also includes a discussion of what the parties’ relationship had been up to this time, what brought them together and what their relationship would be in the future.

In the New Covenant the relationship of Christians had been that of enemies of God and sinners. The goodness of God is what brings them together and their relationship in the future will be that of friends and family.

The choice also includes a preliminary exchange of gifts such as clothing, weapons, rings or dowry. This demonstrates the parties’ goodwill toward one another.

In the New Covenant the exchange of gifts takes place around the sacrament of baptism. The individual brings his gifts of repentance from dead works and faith towards God when he gets water baptized. That is why water baptism is sometimes referred to as a baptism of repentance. God also brings His gifts . . . the forgiveness of sins and a new life for the individual or as some would say . . . the gift of eternal life. God evidences these gifts by giving the individual the Holy Spirit who then comes to dwell within the individual. This is called being baptized with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit serves as the seal of the covenant or in other words it is God’s way of “sealing the deal.”

The Law

The second element, “The Law” or “terms of the agreement” consists of a **promise to exchange** lives. For example, your debts are my debts, my bank account is your bank account, my house is your house, my strength is your protection and my body is your body. The legal term for this relationship of chosen bondage is “lovingkindness.”¹⁵

The idea of an exchanged life with Christ through the New Covenant has huge implications for Christians. Basically they get to exchange everything they are or have for everything that Christ is and has. For example their sins for His righteousness, their physical talents and gifts for His spiritual gifts, their worldly reasoning for His wisdom and their sorrows for His joy. He also gets their obedience in exchange for His provision and their faith in what He says in exchange for His reward. Is that a good deal or what?

Then the parties make vows or promises to one another. For example in a wedding ceremony we usually hear a promise of love and faithfulness to one another for better or worse, richer or poorer and in sickness and health as long as we both shall live.

Christians hear similar words as the Apostle Paul reminds them in Hebrews 13:5 that Christ said: *“I will never leave you or forsake you.”*

The Law also consists of **curses** and **blessings**. In other words, bad things happen to those who do not adhere to the terms of the covenant and good things happen when they do.

¹⁴ For example, “*Many are called* (invited) *but few are chosen*” (accept). (*Matthew 22:14*)

¹⁵ Lovingkindness (covenant loyalty or faithfulness) is a tender (soft, delicate, yielding, mild, gentle, precious, considerate, dear) and benevolent (for the purpose of doing good, kindness, help) affection (to strive after).

We find some examples of New Covenant blessings and curses in the words of Jesus. For example, in the Beatitudes we hear these kinds of words: *“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth.”* Jesus also expressed **curses** when He said: *“Do not judge lest you be judged. If you do not forgive men, then your Father will not forgive your transgression. Therefore I say to you, any sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven men, but blasphemy against the Spirit shall not be forgiven.”*

The Sacrifice

The third element, “The Sacrifice” consists of shedding the blood of at least one animal whose body is cut into pieces and divided into two separate piles of meat. This is done with the thought that the two bloody heaps of meat will stand as **witnesses** that the parties are giving each other to one another unto death. The sacrificial element of a covenant is foundational since the Hebrew word for covenant means to “**divide**” or “cut in two”.¹⁶

The two bloody heaps of meat are meant to convey a couple of additional thoughts to the participating parties. They are: (1) If you dare break or become unfaithful to this covenant, may God do this to you and more and (2) In order to keep this covenant, I will die if necessary.

Once the meat is separated, the representatives **walk** through the pieces in a figure eight. The number eight has a dual meaning. In the Bible it represents a “new beginning”. From the book of Genesis we learn that God created the heavens and the earth in six days and on the seventh day He rested. From this we are to understand that the number seven represents the completion of the cycle, therefore the number eight represents “the starting another cycle” or “beginning something new.” A second meaning for the number eight arises when it is laid on its side. The number (∞) then becomes the symbol for “infinity” or “without end” or “eternal”.

A great picture of covenant making is found in the Bible, when God makes a covenant with Abram. This is found in the book of Genesis, chapter 15. A portion of that chapter reads as follows: *So God said to him, “Bring Me a three year old heifer, and a three year old female goat, and a three year old ram, and a turtledove, and a young pigeon.” Then Abram brought all these to Him and cut them in two, and laid each half opposite the other; but he did not cut the birds. It came about when the sun had set, that it was very dark, and behold, there appeared a smoking oven and a flaming torch which passed between these pieces. On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram. (Genesis 15:9, 10, 17 and 18)*

In the New Covenant, God provides the sacrifice . . . His son, Jesus Christ, “the Lamb of God.” Jesus serves as a witness to the covenant. But God has called other witnesses as well. They are Heaven and Earth, the Law and the Prophets, heavenly angels and members of the congregation as well as the water, the blood and the Spirit as referenced in 1 John 5:7-8.

The Sign

The fourth element of a covenant is “The Sign.” It is also known as a “**memorial**” or “in remembrance of”, and is used to help the parties remember the covenant they have made with

¹⁶ “**divide**” or “**cut in two**”: i.e. Genesis 15:1-18, “. . . When the sun had gone down and it was dark, behold, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces. On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram . . .” and Jeremiah 34:18, “And the men who transgressed my covenant and did not keep the terms of the covenant that they made before me, I will make them like the calf that they cut in two and passed between in parts.”

each other. Throughout history people have used several different types of signs and memorials. For example: They heaped up stones, or planted a forest, or exchanged herds of animals and in marriages they exchanged rings.

Many times they exchanged names and when the covenant was complete they would eat a meal. The meal was usually a light one . . . symbolic in nature consisting of bread and wine or water. This memorial meal can easily be identified at weddings. It's when the bride and groom feed each other a piece of cake and share a glass of champagne.

When an individual enters the New Covenant he takes another name, "Christian" and participates in the covenant meal, which is known as "communion".

After Jesus' death the New Covenant was offered immediately to the Jewish people, which was in accordance with the Scripture. In Jeremiah 31:31 God had declared, "*I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.*" Some ten years later the New Covenant was offered to the Gentiles. The story of how this occurred is the subject of chapter 10, in the book of Acts.

– Teaching by Michael Gibson of Key2Changes.com

Discipleship Lessons by Verse

Book 1

“Fishers of Men”

John 1:35-51, Luke 5:1-11, 27-28, Matthew 4:18-22, 9:9, Mark 1:16-20, 2:14

Lesson 1

John 4:1-42

Lesson 2

Matthew 5:1-12, Luke 6:20-26

Lesson 3

Matthew 5:13-16

Lesson 4

Mathew 5:17-20

Lesson 5

Matthew 5:21-26

Lesson 6

Matthew 5:27-32

Lesson 7

Matthew 5:33-37

Lesson 8

Matthew 5:38-42, Luke 6:29-30

Lesson 9

Matthew 5:43-48, Luke 6:27-28, 31-35

Lesson 10

Matthew 6:1-18

Lesson 11

Matthew 6:9-15

Lesson 12

Matthew 6:19-23

Lesson 13

Matthew 7:1-5, Luke 6:36-42

Lesson 14

Matthew 7:6

Lesson 15

Matthew 7:7-14

Lesson 16

Matthew 7:15-29, Luke 6:43-49

Lesson 17

Learn what Jesus teaches us to do, what it means and how it is applied to our lives today as we walk by the Spirit!

Fishers of Men . . . introduces Christians to the subject of becoming disciples of Jesus Christ and covers the first 17 lessons He taught His disciples. Beginning with His command to “Follow Me,” Jesus lays a solid foundation of instructions for developing the character of Christ within individuals.

- *Jesus’ teachings have completely transformed my life. (M.M.)*
- *Jesus invites you to walk with Him and learn from Him. (J.G.)*
- *I have been going to church for over 30 years and have never heard anything like this before. Why don’t churches teach this? (J.R.)*

Upon coming to faith in Jesus Christ at age 33, Michael Gibson earnestly wanted someone to disciple him in the faith. Finding no one . . . he became a student, and then teacher of God’s word.

One statement in particular captured his attention, “Go . . . make disciples . . . baptizing them . . . teaching them to observe all that I commanded you.” (Matthew 28:19-20) From that he wrote his first book, “Follow Me” (1996), a compilation of the four gospels into one account while highlighting each of the 263 instructions Jesus commanded His disciples to do and teach. Subsequently, he has written the three-part teaching series, “A Journey with Jesus” and many other books which help equip believers to do the work of the ministry.

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