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New Testament Marriage--What's New?

If you are a Christian couple, then God wanted you to be married because He believes you can abide in and follow the Lord Jesus more abundantly as husband and wife than you could have done by remaining single.

That's what is new about the New Testament! Everything is new, including your marriage as a young Christian couple. Each of you is a new creation by the regeneration and indwelling of the Holy Spirit. So now, together in Christ, you love the One who is both your Savior and Lord.

And now listen to what the Lord Jesus says to you. "This is the kind of relationship I want you to have with me personally..."

"Abide in Me" and
"Follow Me."

In time, God will lovingly unfold His roadmap for your future. But even before you know any specifics about what He has prepared for you, you can be confident that He wants you to do two things: to abide and to follow. So, it will help you to understand what these mean.

Abiding ("being at home with" or "remaining in") is the process of **learning Jesus**—what He loves, what He values, what He plans. Then you continue to love what He loves, value what He values and welcome what He has wisely planned for those who love Him. Your relationship with Jesus will look more and more like His relationship with His Father.

Notice how "abiding" worked in the Gospels. Jesus literally called men to spend several years as His daily companions. They were, as far as we can tell, young men (the 20-32-year-old group) and some of them may have been young marrieds (we know Peter was). And by abiding, they learned Him so well that these "uneducated men" made the Jewish intellectuals of the Sanhedrin "marvel" at how clearly and powerfully they could explain the Gospel of Jesus Christ simply from "having been with Jesus" (please read Acts 4:1-13).

Following ("doing the same thing someone else has done") is **working alongside** the Risen Christ as He saves the lost and makes them His disciples. Notice again how this worked in the Gospels. As His earthly ministry progressed, Jesus entrusted this same redemptive work to His disciples. Following soon meant being sent on short-term missions to proclaim the approach of the kingdom of God. Following was training for future ministry so that His disciples were "...appointed to go and bear fruit that would endure" (John 15:16-18). As Jesus had planned, they became "fishers of men"!

The disciples fellowshiped with Jesus and labored in His vineyard until they stepped into His presence in glory. That's what the exhortations to abide and to follow look like when they are lived out!

When God brought each of you into a living relationship with Himself, these same two mandates, to abide and to follow, were given to you personally by the Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who ministers Christ to us, and it is He who gifts and empowers us for fruit-bearing (John 16:13-15).

So what does all of this mean to the two of you now that you are married? In His perfect wisdom God brought the two of you together so that by His power working through you He will receive greater glory. Isn't that what you both desire? By learning Jesus and walking alongside Him as a couple (working

for the increase of His kingdom) the spiritual fruit you will see God produce will exceed the sum of what your individual efforts could have produced. That's what God dreams for your marriage.

If you are like some of the other young couples we have been privileged to know, this may already be your settled conviction. Your marriage is, like your individual lives were before you got married, **for Christ above all others**. This is God's work within you—His “fire” that the two of you share. You may have talked about it often during your courtship, and perhaps, it was an agreement that preceded your engagement. “We will serve the Lord together” has always been your mutual desire.