

Attending religious services predictive of fidelity

A new study published in the *Journal of Marriage and Family* reveals that attendance at religious services predicts marital fidelity.

Led by David C. Atkins and Deborah E. Kessel of the Fuller Theological Seminary, the study explores how various dimensions of religious life, including prayer, closeness to God, faith, and religious activities related to infidelity.

Religious service attendance was the only unique, religious predictor of infidelity. Prayer, importance of religiousness, and strong reported faith were not predictors.

The authors believe that that attendance likely implies prevention of infidelity in the sense that it is a shared activity between spouses. Attending services can create a strong network of relationships within the church, synagogue, or mosque that can provide social support to the spouses. Also, attending services means that an individual is hearing religious teaching on marital fidelity and the general importance of marriage.

“Our study focuses the spotlight on religious service attendance with respect to this important aspect of marital life” the authors conclude. “It opens the door for a host of questions about why attendance might have this special association.”

The participants for this study were drawn from the 1998 General Social Survey (GSS) conducted by the National Opinion Research Center. The surveys consisted of structured, face-to-face interviews with questions related to religion and spirituality.

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