

News Story Summary

This year, the Institute of Family Studies (IFS) released study results, which showed that couples who go to church together report higher levels of happiness than those who don't. Seventy-eight percent say they are very happy in their relationships. In addition, research from sociologist Brad Wright indicated that 6 in 10 evangelicals who do not attend church are divorced, compared with only 38% who regularly attend. The IFS research found two aspects of church attendance that contributed to marriage happiness and longevity: shared friends and praying together. Prayer was a much stronger indicator of happiness than any other religious factor. Seventy-eight percent of those who prayed together every week were classified as very happy.

(For more on this story, search the Internet using the phrase "church attendance and marriage.")

Focus Attention

Open the session by asking the question: *What do you think contributes to a happy and long-lasting marriage between a man and woman?* (List responses on the board.) Invite the group to listen as you share the news story. Ask: *Do you find the findings of these studies surprising? Why or why not? How do the things we listed compare to the findings of these studies?* Challenge the group to look for directions given by Peter that contribute to a lasting marriage.

Challenge

Stress the fact that our marriages, just like all other aspects of our lives, must be deeply rooted in our faith. Remind the group to the news story. Emphasize that the statistics in the news story are evidence of the value of a shared faith. State: *None of us have achieved perfection in our lives, nor in our marriages. We strive every day to make them more and more pleasing to Christ. God's Word and His communion with us through prayer, guide us in this process.* Encourage married group members to think of one action they can take this week to invest in their marriages and to commit through prayer to carry out that action.