Wheatley Report: Religion in the Home

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In October 2020, BYU’s Wheatley Institution released compelling findings from a multinational study they conducted on the impact of religious observance for individuals and couples. The study, *Religion in the Home*, reported on data collected from over 16,000 couples in 11 nations and across various faith traditions, representing a strikingly diverse sample of people.

Although many prior studies have investigated differences between secular and religious individuals on a number of personal and relational outcomes, this study provided new insight by differentiating between respondents with varying religious “dosages” (e.g., between individuals who occasionally attend church services—“nominals,” those who attend regularly—“attenders,” and those who attend regularly and engage in home worship behaviors—“home worshippers”).

This distinction allowed researchers to analyze and compare outcomes across different levels of religious involvement, finding that even when controlling for income and other key demographics, men and women who worship at home experience significant individual and relational benefits compared to other groups.

For example, the analysis suggests that “home worshippers” are significantly more likely to report greater life meaning, happiness, and a sense of God’s love in their lives, as well as strengthened marital outcomes like enhanced emotional closeness, sexual satisfaction, and overall relationship quality. These findings are especially intriguing and relevant to consider in the context of the current global pandemic, which has necessitated the temporary closure of many houses of worship throughout the world and spurred a shift to at-home religious practices for many people of faith.

As part of the release of this study, a series of articles were written by faculty and students in BYU’s School of Family Life (SFL) to make the significant findings of this report more widely known. BYU students and faculty regularly engage in public scholarship efforts to make reliable social science information accessible across many publication outlets.

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