

Pastor's Page—February 2017

On we go, heading into the mid-winter months! If you made New Years resolutions, I hope that you have stayed the course and are finding them rewarding. One of the more frequent resolutions is to attend church more regularly, often accompanied by a plan to read the Bible more frequently. In our age of constant busyness both can be challenging, but the rewards can be eternal.

The latest data on happiness and religious belief from a Pew Research Center survey shows that religious people, on balance, are happier than nonreligious people.

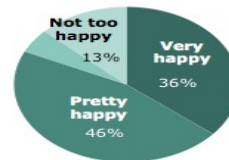
Adults who attended religious services once a week or more often were significantly more likely to report feeling “very happy” (36%) than those who attended seldom or never (23%), and less likely to say they were “pretty happy” (46% vs. 55%) or “not too happy” (13% vs. 19%). By the way, those who attend services more than once a week are the most happy of all, with 43% reporting that they are “very happy.”

All of this can be very significant for us living here in Minnesota, where the temperatures are cold, the snow keeps us from our favorite activities, and the days seem to grow only minutely longer as winter drags on. It turns out that prying yourself out of bed and going to church may be good for you, both physically and psychologically—not to mention spiritually.

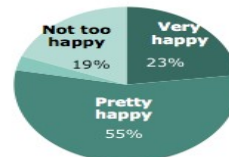
Those Who Attend Religious Services Happier

Generally, how would you say things are in your life—would you say that you are...

Attends religious services weekly+



Attends religious services seldom/never



Note: Don't Know/Refused responses shown but not labeled.
Source: Pew Research Center's Social and Demographic Trends survey, Nov 28-Dec 5, 2012. N=2,511.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

A related study found those who believe in God with no doubts are more likely to strongly disagree with the idea that life does not have meaning. Stephen Cranney of the Population Studies Center at the University of Pennsylvania recently conducted the first large scale study that empirically tests the association between belief in God and feeling a sense of purpose in life. Survey respondents who said they believe in God with no doubts also disagreed most strongly (61%) with the statement “In my opinion, life does not serve any purpose.” Sounds like a great reason to join us for Sunday school, worship, women’s Bible study, or other congregational events throughout 2017! Be on the lookout for other opportunities to get involved soon.

While you are perhaps hiding from the elements indoors more often during the winter, I hope you’ll take an opportunity to read ahead on our Scripture lessons for Sundays in February. The New Testament lessons will come from the first three chapters of Paul’s First Letter to the Corinthians, while our Gospel lessons and sermons all month will examine the fifth chapter of Matthew in its entirety.

If you think that TV has all the drama and controversy, then you haven’t read the Bible lately! Matthew’s fifth chapter is packed with powerful teachings from Jesus—from the Beatitudes to statements on anger, adultery, retaliation, and love for your enemies. Life applications abound, so join us for worship and invite a friend—for your health as well as theirs!

Yours in Christ,
Rev. Cory Germain