

Students’ spiritual foci and spiritual orientations

Spiritual Focus Indexes

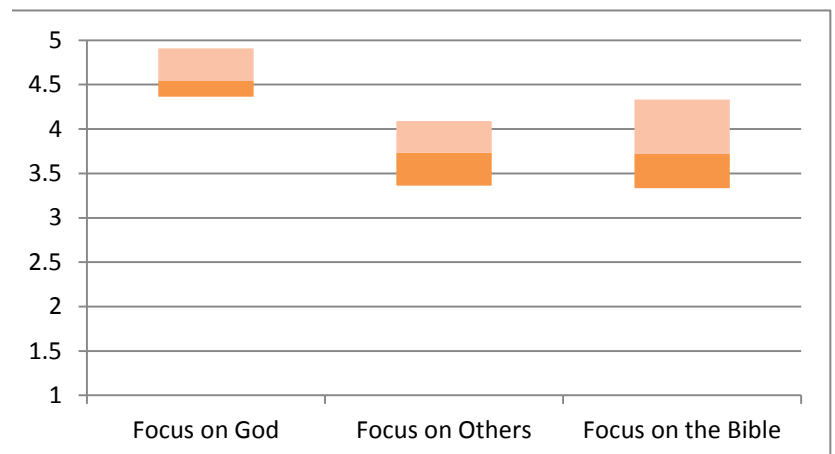
The Christian faith is built around a focus on God (Matthew 22:37), others (Matthew 22:39), and the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16).

Having a “focus” in your life means that something has become central to who you are and what you do. A focus in your spiritual life means something is central to who you are and what you do spiritually.

In the process of taking the half hour Christian Life Survey, the students were asked a variety of questions about what they believe and how they live. Included in that larger set of questions were a set of questions focused on the extent to which God is a focus point in their spiritual life, the extent to which others are a focus point in their spiritual life, and the extent to which the Bible is a focus point in their lives.

The questions used to see if the students have a focus on God asked, in several different ways, about their beliefs and desires relative to God. The questions used to see if the students have a focus on others asked, in several different ways, about the extent to which they acted proactively for others. The questions used to see if the students have a focus on the Bible asked, in several different ways, about the ways the Bible is involved in their daily lives.

The students indicated a very high average focus on God with a value of 4.5 on the 5 point scale, and high average levels of agreement with a focus on others and a focus on the Bible—the mean value on each of those indexes is 3.7



	Focus on God	Focus on Others	Focus on the Bible
75th percentile	4.9091	4.0909	4.3333
mean	4.5395	3.7334	3.7206
25th percentile	4.3636	3.3636	3.3333

There is very little spread between the 25th and 75th percentiles for the students’ focus on God. They all tend to have about the same level of focus on God—and that is a very high level.

There is also relatively little spread on the other indexes although there is more variation in students’ index values on the Focus on the Bible index than there is in the other two indexes.

In sum then, these 4000 plus students at Christian colleges consistently have a very high focus on God and also have a high focus on others and the Bible. For these students, a focus on God does not preclude a focus on others (or vice versa). Also, there is little variation in the students’ focus on God but there is a wider variation in their focus on the Bible.

Spiritual Orientations Indexes

Having a “spiritual orientation” in your life means that you tend to engage with spiritual practices in a particular thematic way.

In the process of taking the half hour Christian Life Survey, the students were asked a wide variety of questions about what they believe and how they live.

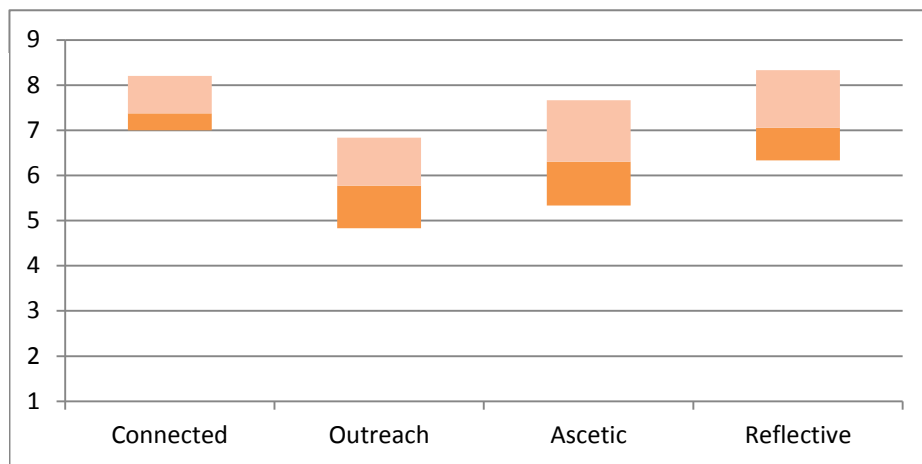
This large set of questions was analyzed in a way that allows us to see which kinds of thinking and behavior form a thematic aspect of the Christian life.

Metaphorically speaking, the four spiritual orientations we have identified were identified by what grew organically out of the patterns in the students answers to all the questions. We did not start the surveying with the assumption that any particular spiritual orientations existed. The four spiritual orientations found in the patterns of the students’ answers are: being spiritually connected, engaging in outreach (both evangelistic and service oriented), an ascetic spirituality, and a reflective spirituality

The students indicated a very high connectedness with a value of 7.4 on the 9 point scale, and high average practice of reflective spirituality with a mean value of 7. They also reported slightly lower engagement with ascetic spirituality—a mean value of 6.3—and a moderately high engagement with outreach practices—the mean value was 5.8.

There is very little spread between the 25th and 75th percentiles for the students’ connectedness. They all tend to have about the same very high engagement with practices that connect them to God and other Christians.

There is a greater amount of variation among the students in the other spiritual orientations—particularly in the ascetic orientation.



	Connected	Outreach	Ascetic	Reflective
75th percentile	8.2	6.8333	7.6667	8.3333
Mean	7.3716	5.7706	6.3026	7.0543
25th percentile	7	4.8333	5.3333	6.3333

The **Center** for
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Data Collection

In the spring of 2013, students at 13 Christian universities from across the United States were invited to complete a half-hour on-line survey that asked about their spiritual background, spiritual lifestyles, scripture engagement, love of and relation to God, love of others, and their Christian identity.

4,210 traditional-age full-time students participated. Responses to the survey were weighted for proportional representativity of gender and year in school.