

The Christian Life Survey 2014-2015 Administration at 22 Christian Colleges



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Students' spiritual orientations: Connectedness, outreach, reflective

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. The set of questions included a variety of questions about spiritual practices and lifestyle that were analyzed in a way that allows us to see which kinds of thinking and behavior form a thematic aspect of the students' Christian lives.

Four spiritual orientations were found in the patterns of the students' answers: being spiritually connected, engaging in outreach (both evangelistic and service oriented), an ascetic spirituality, and a reflective spirituality. In the 2013 research we reported on all four of the orientations we'd found. In this research we are just reporting on connectedness, reflective, and outreach orientations. The ascetic measurement is not included due to low responses on the items.

The results are provided in three different ways. Chart One shows the 6,000-plus students' mean scores for the indexes as well as the 25th and 75th percentile values. Chart Two shows the percentage of students having each score when the index is collapsed to discreet values. Chart Three shows a typology of which combinations of the orientations the students have.

Average index scores:

Chart One shows that the 6,000-plus students indicated a very high connectedness, with a value of 7.4 on the nine-point scale, and high average practice of reflective spirituality, with a mean value of 7.5. These values indicate that the students, on average, practice connectedness and reflection in their spiritual lives more than weekly. Outreach is less commonly practiced but is more common as service to the needy (which happens, on average, closer to weekly than monthly) than as evangelism (which, on average, is practiced monthly).

Discreet values:

While the distribution of index scores shown in Chart One is the more common way to present such findings, the students' values on the index (their average answers across all the questions) can be collapsed into discreet values like those on the original questions. This is done in Chart Two where the students' average answers are collapsed to the answers closest to their average scores. As can be seen in Chart Two, 82 percent of the students indicated that they practice reflective spirituality weekly or more, and 82 percent also indicated that they practice spiritual connectedness weekly or more. Fifty percent of the students practice outreach service weekly or more, and 25 percent practice outreach evangelism weekly or more.

Typology of orientations:

Chart Three places each of the 6,000-plus students into the combination of orientations they practice more than weekly. Twenty-six percent are high on connectedness and reflection only; 16 percent were high on connectedness, reflection, and service; and 14 percent were high on connectedness, reflection, service, and evangelism. An additional 14 percent of the students were not high on any of the orientations.

	25 th percentile	Mean	75 th percentile
Connected	6.8	7.3528	8.2
Outreach service	5.4	6.38	7.4
Outreach evangelism	4	5.2545	6.75
Reflective	6.8	7.5168	8.4

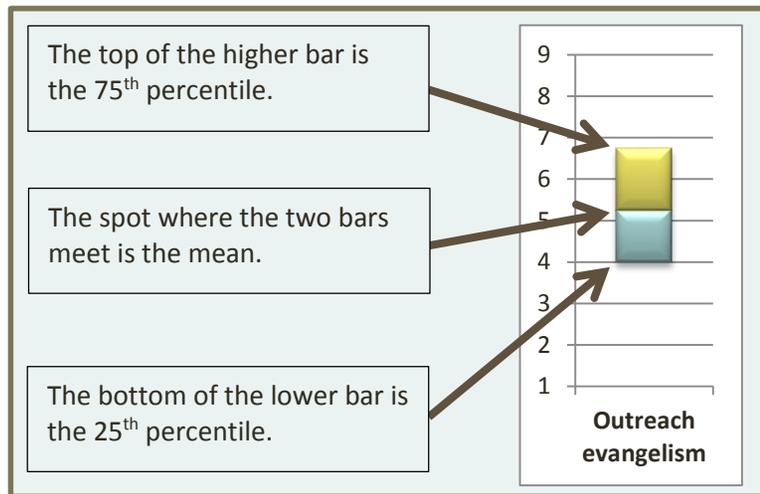


Chart One: Students' spiritual orientations (average frequency of behavior)

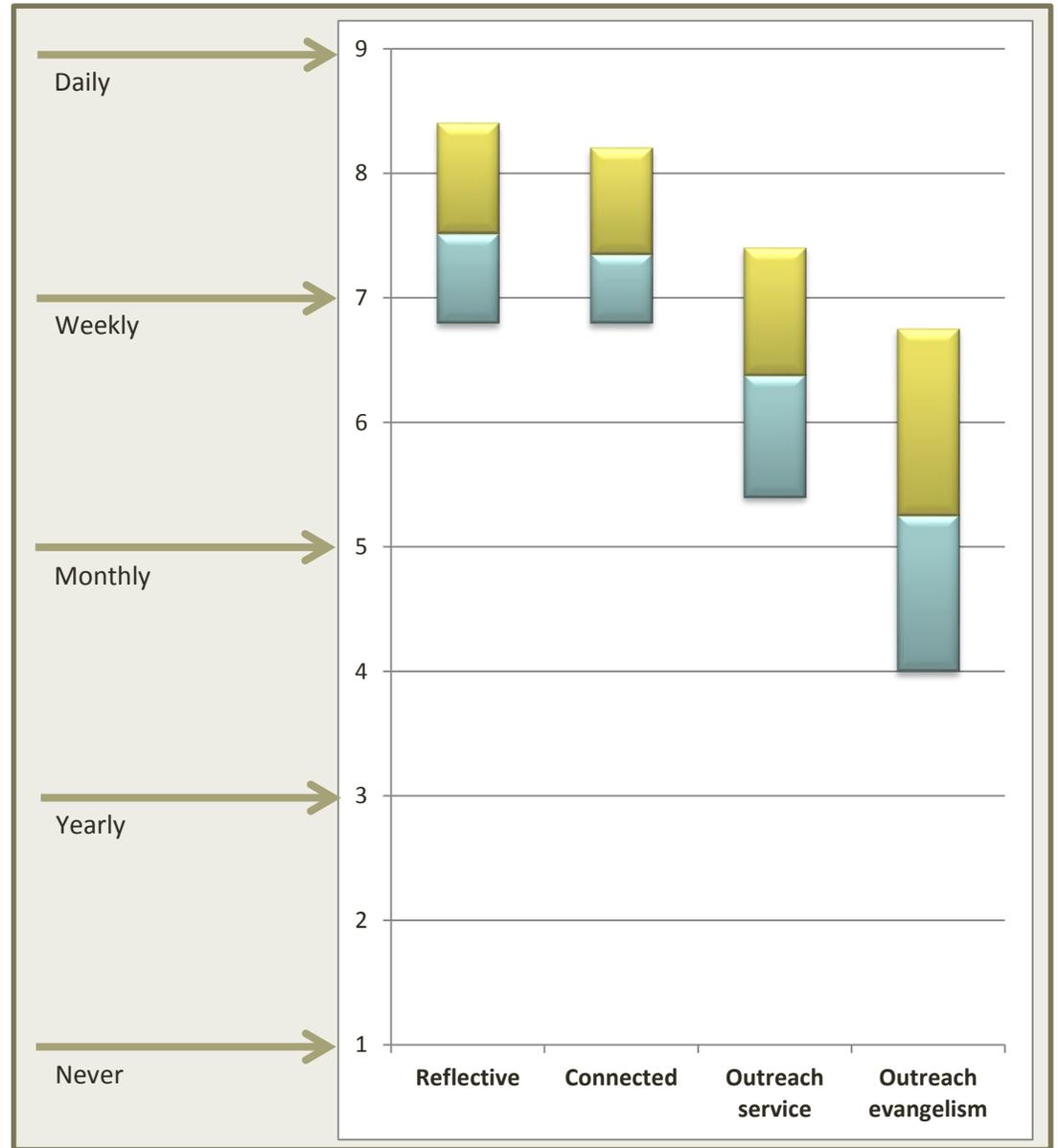


Chart Two: Students' spiritual orientation scores
 (collapsed to discreet values and summarized in percentages)

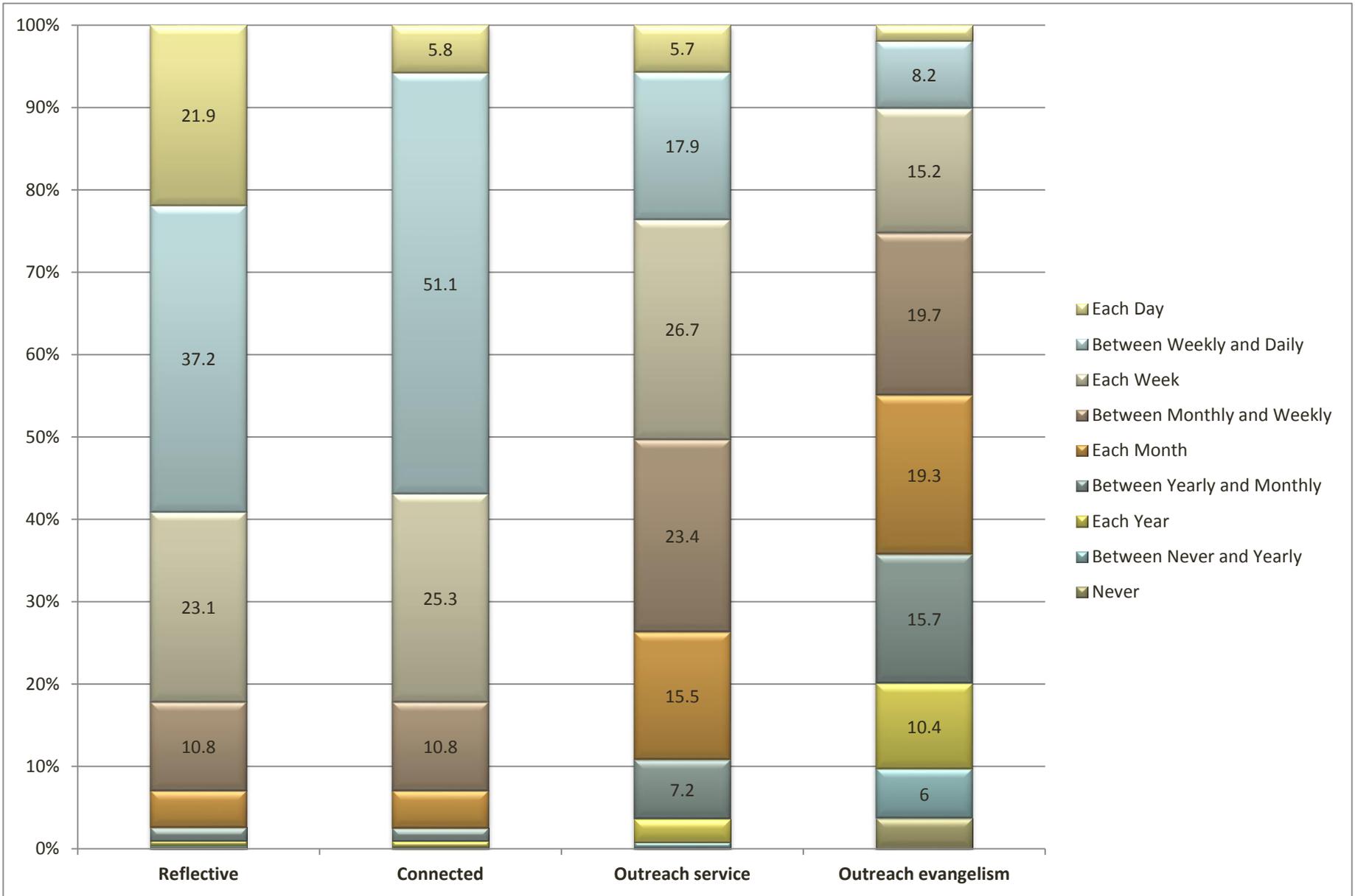
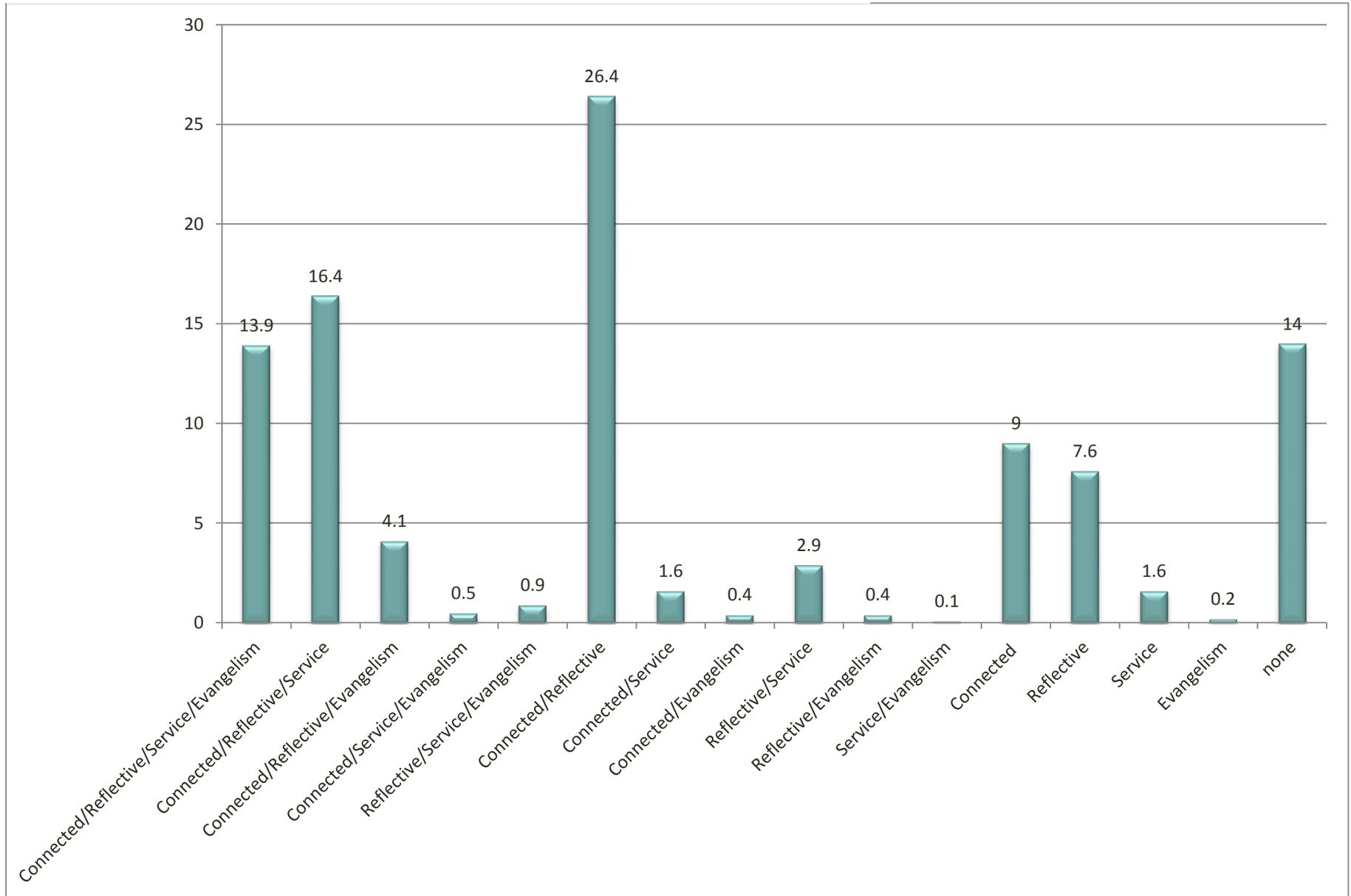


Chart Three: Typology of students' orientations (percents; categories are mutually exclusive)



Who are the students in this study?

In the 2014-2015 school year, the Christian Life Survey was administered to students at 25 Christian colleges in the United States. The results shown in this summary brief, however, are only for the traditional-age, traditional-program freshmen through seniors from the 22 colleges that provided population proportions that allowed representative weighting to be used. Students are weighted to be proportionately representative for sex and year in school for their colleges.

These results are for 6,074 students from 22 Christian colleges in the United States.

The students are overwhelmingly Protestant Christians who are serious about their spiritual life (they chose to attend a Christian college and they agreed to participate in a half-hour survey about their spiritual life).

The students represented here, then, are traditional-age, devout Christians attending 22 Christian colleges in the USA. Great care should be employed when generalizing these results to any other groups.

How was this topic measured?

The survey questions used:

Participants were presented with five statements about how reflective they are in their spiritual life:

I reflect on who God is.

I reflect on what it means for me to be a Christian.

I reflect on the meaning of prayer in my life.

I reflect on what is good and right.

I reflect on the meaning of scripture in my life.

They were asked five questions about being “connected” in their Christian life:

I engage in fellowship with Christians.

I attend worship services.

I read the Bible.

I worship God.

I meet with a spiritual small group or spiritual mentor.

They were asked five questions about their outreach through service to others:

I serve those in need.

I help others who are in difficulty.

I help people who are treated unjustly.

I serve the people around me.

I allow myself to suffer for a worthy cause.

And they were presented with four statements about their outreach through evangelism:

I talk to non-believers in ways that I think will help them come closer to Christ.

I try to evangelize others so they will become Christians.

I go out of my way to be in contact with non-believers.

I act in specific ways around non-believers so they might come closer to Christ.

The survey:

The Christian Life Survey (CLS) is an online, half-hour survey on Spiritual Formation, Spiritual Orientation (lifestyle), and Scripture Engagement and was conducted in the 2014-2015 school year at the following Christian colleges: Bethel; Biola; California Baptist; Charleston Southern; Corban; Cornerstone; Crown; Fresno Pacific; George Fox; Gordon; Houghton; Judson; The Kings; LeTourneau; Northwest Nazarene; Nyack; Patrick Henry College; Spring Arbor; Tabor; Taylor; Union; Wheaton.



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