

Students' views: "Who has a right to make demands of you?"

How do devout students at Christian colleges rank their rights and responsibilities?

The students were asked "who has a right to make demands of you?" and they were presented with a randomized list of 6 phrases. They had the option to say strongly agree, agree, somewhat agree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat disagree, disagree, or strongly disagree for each phrase.

When placed in order according to the percentage of students who somewhat agreed, agreed, or strongly agreed, the students indicated this ordering of who has a right to make demands of them:

the largest percent agreed that family has a right to make demands, the Christian community was next, followed by personal self-development, friends, country, and personal happiness.

Large percentages of students agreed or strongly agreed that family, the Christian community, and personal self-development have a right to make demands of them and moderate percentages of students agreed or strongly agreed that friends, country, and personal happiness have a right to make demands of them.

Beyond these general patterns in the students' answers, there are a couple of particular findings worth noting. First, for these 4000 plus students, a greater percentage indicated that others have the right to make demands more than self does and, second, to the extent that self is considered, personal self-development is seen as far more appropriate than personal happiness—though both had over fifty percent who agreed at some level. Forty three percent of the students agreed or strongly agreed that they have a right to live life in ways that promote their own self-development while only 29 percent agreed or strongly agreed that they have a right to live life for their own happiness. Only eight percent disagreed or strongly disagreed that they have a right to live in ways that promote self-development, while 20 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed that they have a right to live for their own happiness.

In sum then, for the 4000 plus students at Christian colleges who responded to the survey, large percentages indicated that family and the Christian community in particular have the right to make demands of them. And, to the extent that self is the focus, students showed noticeably more support for self-development than for personal happiness.

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.

Christian College Students' Views: "Who can make demands of me?" (percentages)

