

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



TAYLOR UNIVERSITY CENTER FOR
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Factors related to students' **spiritual orientations**

Introduction

The Christian Life Survey (CLS) uses a set of questions on spiritual practices to identify students' spiritual orientations—the ways they live out their spiritual lives. Through six years of refinement the survey has identified four broad approaches to the Christian life: connectedness, reflection, outreach, and asceticism. Connectedness refers to being plugged into church, fellowship, and so forth; reflection refers to being reflective about prayer, Scripture, and other aspects of the Christian life; outreach refers to other-focused activities; and asceticism refers to an orientation toward self-denial and self-discipline.

All of the specific survey questions used in each index are shown in following sections of this report (the collections of variables were identified using exploratory principle axis factor analysis with varimax rotation). The refinement process has created stable sets of measures to identify connectedness, reflection, and outreach, but the measures of asceticism are less certain. Also, outreach has two different forms: outreach service—acting to help those in need of physical and social help—and outreach evangelism—acting to help those in need of salvation.

The 6,000-plus students studied here (see Box One) have high average levels of reflective orientation and connected orientation but lower average levels of outreach (in either form). Each orientation index is constructed of a set of questions that asked how often the students engaged in particular spiritual activities (see Box Two). The questions were answered on a nine-point scale that ranged from “never” (1) to “each day” (9). A value of 7 on this scale means “each week” and the students' overall average on the reflective and connected orientations is just above “each week.” Outreach service and outreach evangelism are less common, with means of 6.38 and 5.25, which are between “each month” (5) and “each week” (7).

Box One: 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.

Students' spiritual orientations: Connected and reflective

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

The percentage of students who indicate that they are involved in a particular orientation's activities weekly or more is shown in Chart One. Almost three-fourths of the students indicate they practice reflection or connectedness weekly or more often (72 to 73 percent of students). Only 38 percent of students practice outreach service weekly or more, and only 20 percent practice outreach evangelism weekly or more. Chart One also has information about asceticism. In the 2012-2013 data collection (4,000-plus students at 13 Christian colleges), 44 percent of students indicated engaging in ascetic practices weekly or more, and in the 2014-2015 data collection (6,000-plus students at 22 Christian colleges), 60 percent indicated that they engaged in ascetic practices weekly or more. The large difference is due to instability in the grouping of questions found analytically. Asceticism appears to be a valuable orientation to understand, but the methodology used to measure it needs additional work.

Another way to consider students' spiritual orientations is to create a typology of all possible combinations of orientations in which students might indicate high involvement. Chart Two provides a graphic distribution of the students' orientations. The categories are mutually exclusive, so if, for example, a student is in the "connected/reflective" category, he or she is not also included in the "connected" or "reflective" categories. The "connected" category, for example, is for students who only have high engagement in that one orientation and no others. As was found in the other results presented above, students are more likely to have orientations toward being connected and reflective than to be engaged in either form of outreach. Interestingly, 14 percent of the students do not have a high engagement with any of these orientations. That does not mean they are not oriented in any of these ways, it just means they are not highly oriented in any of them (engaged in any of them weekly or more on average).

Box Two: How was this topic measured?

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

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 presented with five statements about being "connected" in their Christian lives:

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 presented with five statements 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.

Chart One: Percent whose average answer is weekly or more

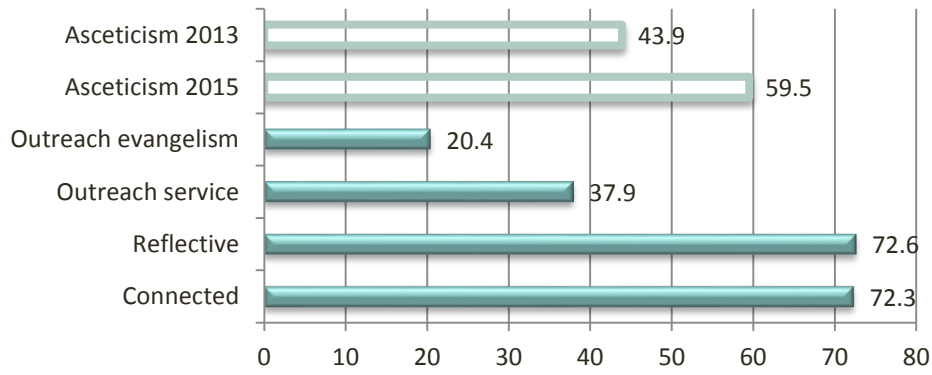
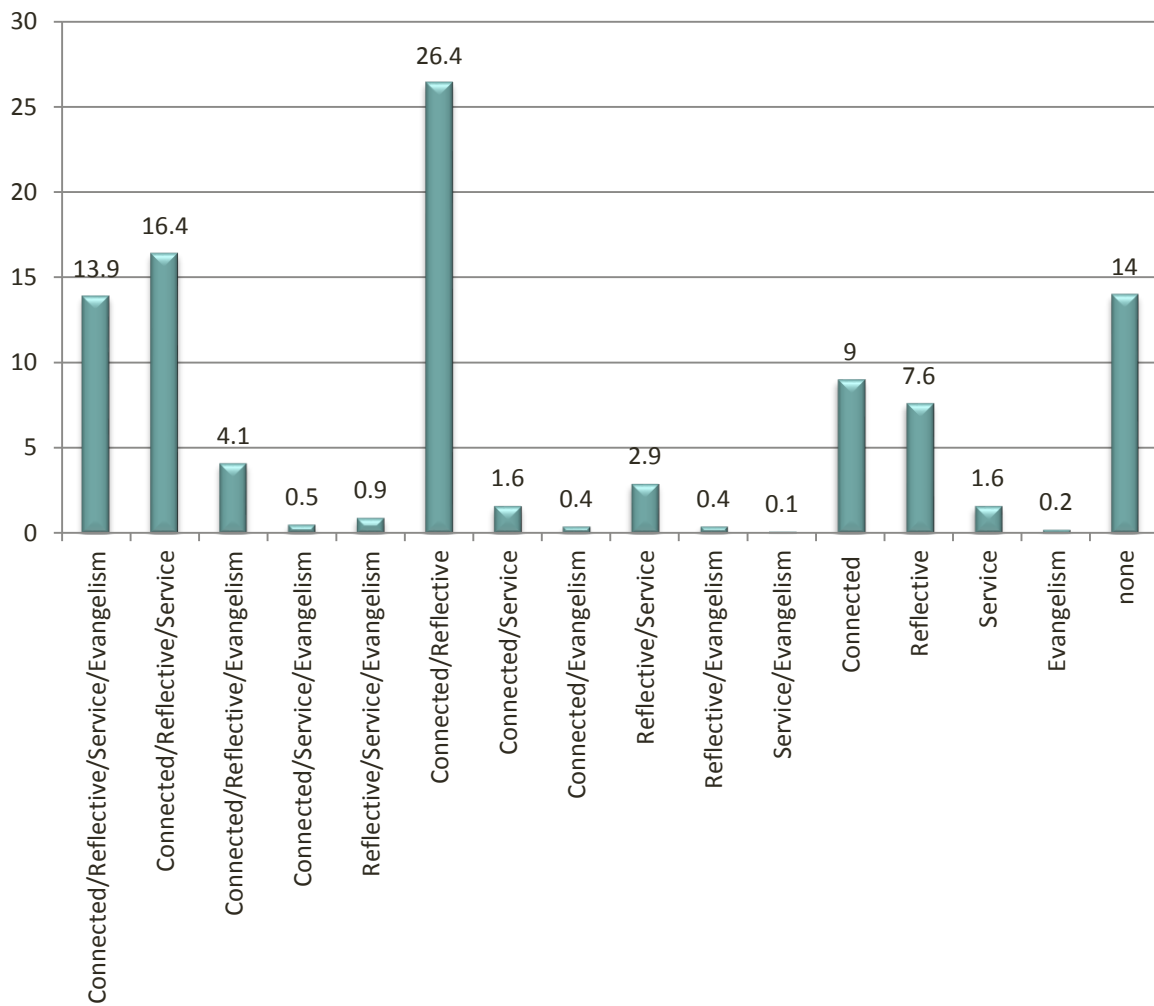


Chart Two: Typology of students' orientations (percents; categories are mutually exclusive)



Students' spiritual orientations: Two groups of mutually supportive orientations

The Christian Life Survey identified a set of different spiritual orientations in the students' lives—but these orientations tend to gather into two groups of orientations, and the orientations in each group mutually reinforce each other.

As is shown in Chart Three, the different aspects of spiritual life measured in the CLS are very interrelated. But a more in-depth analysis (shown in Chart Four) finds that there are two groups of orientations that are mutually supportive that are also related with the three foci of spiritual life measured in the CLS.

One group includes the connected and reflective orientations and also includes a focus on the Bible and a focus on God. The other group includes both outreach orientations as well as a focus on others. Both being reflective and engaging in evangelism are clearly in one group more than the other, but each does have some role in both groups of spiritual attributes.

	Reflective	Connected	Outreach service	Outreach evangelism
Reflective		.600	.505	.470
Connected	.600		.434	.453
Outreach service	.505	.434		.584
Outreach evangelism	.470	.453	.584	

Chart Four: Factor loadings for spiritual orientations and spiritual foci (principle axis factor analysis with varimax rotation)

Rotated Factor Matrix		
	Factor	
	1	2
Focus on Bible	.723	.265
Connected	.705	.294
Reflective	.672	.391
Focus on God	.602	.144
Outreach service	.186	.945
Outreach evangelism	.392	.555
Focus on others	.288	.518

Students' spiritual orientations: Factors that affect reflectiveness

Demographic effects:

Only two demographic variables affect students' adoption of a reflective spiritual orientation: family income and political view. Both have very small effects. (See Chart Five.)

Relation to other aspects of spiritual life:

As was shown in Charts Three and Four, being spiritually reflective is particularly related to being spiritually connected and having a focus on the Bible. This is demonstrated in Chart Six as well.

Net effects: which aspects of spiritual life are most related to being reflective?

Chart Seven shows the net effects each aspect of spiritual life has on being reflective, after statistically controlling for the others. The factors that are most likely to promote a reflective orientation are being connected, engaging in service, having a greater focus on the Bible, and having a greater focus on God. (Full GLM results are in the appendix.)

Participants were presented 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.

Chart Five: Reflective spiritual orientation relation to demographics
(η^2 values; all results are statistically significant)

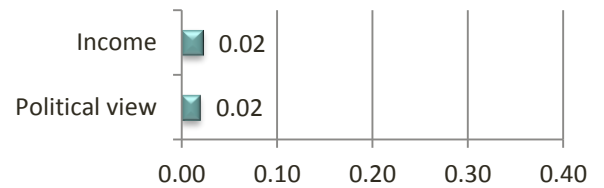


Chart Six: Reflective spiritual orientation relation to spiritual life variables
(r^2 values; all results are statistically significant)

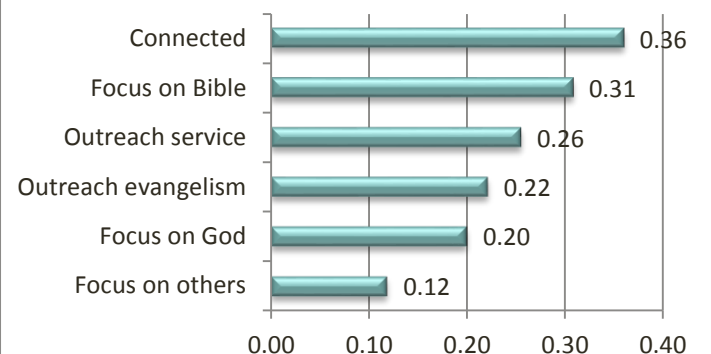
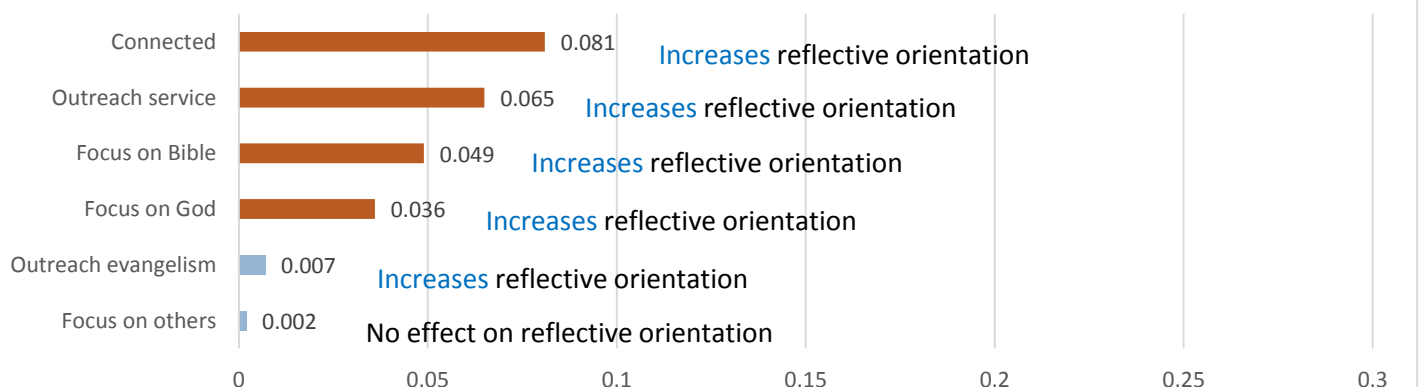


Chart Seven: Net effects on being reflective (GLM partial η^2 values; all results are statistically significant)



Students' spiritual orientations: Factors that affect connectedness

Demographic effects:

Several demographic variables have a small but significant effect on adoption of a connected spiritual orientation, as is shown in Chart Eight. Political view has the only notable effect. It explains six percent of the variation in adoption of a connected orientation—as students are more conservative they are a bit more likely to be connected. The other demographic effects are so small as to not matter.

Relation to other aspects of spiritual life:

As was shown in Charts Three and Four, being spiritually connected is particularly related to being spiritually reflective and having a greater focus on the Bible. This is demonstrated in Chart Nine as well.

Net effects: which aspects of spiritual life are most related to being connected?

Chart Ten shows the net effects each aspect of spiritual life has on adopting a connected orientation, after statistically controlling for the others. Interestingly, a focus on God proves to have the most influence in the net effects model. If a person desires to increase his or her connectedness, increasing his or her focus on God is the single most likely complement to that goal.

A connected orientation is also influenced notably by a reflective orientation and a focus on the Bible. (Full GLM results are in the appendix.)

Participants 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.

Chart Eight: Connected spiritual orientation relation to demographics (η^2 values; all results are statistically significant)

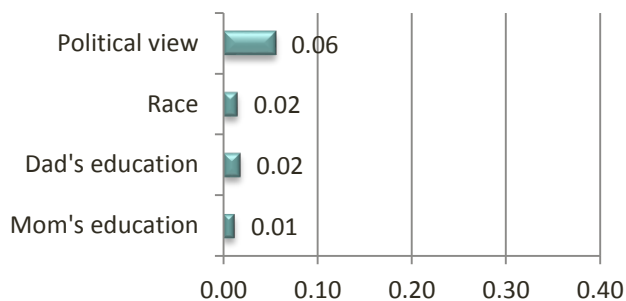


Chart Nine: Connected spiritual orientation relation to spiritual life variables (r^2 values; all results are statistically significant)

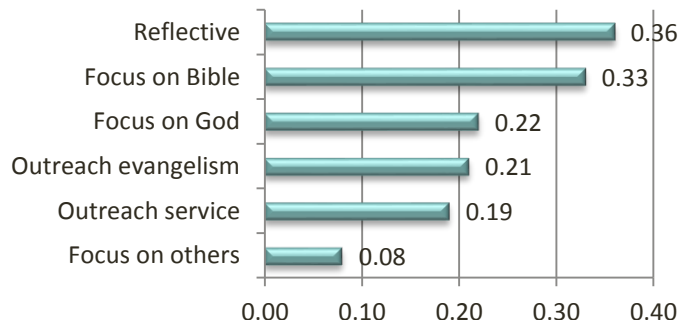
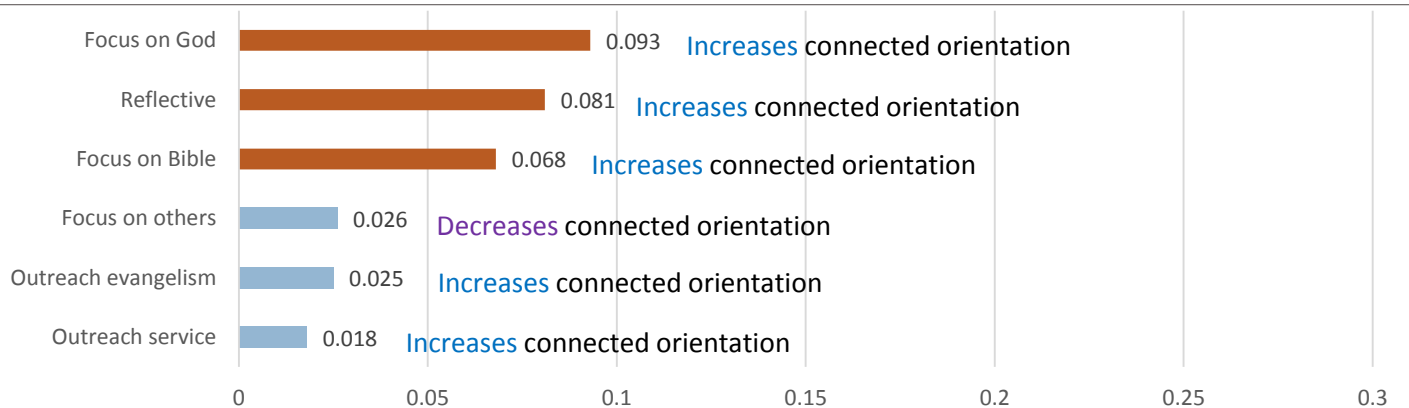


Chart Ten: Net effects on being connected (GLM partial η^2 values; all results are statistically significant)



Students' spiritual orientations: Factors that affect outreach service

Demographic effects:

None of the demographic variables predicted differing amounts of outreach service. Whatever factors affect the adoption of a lifestyle of service, they do not include political view, major, income, education of parents, race, sex, year in school, or GPA.

Relation to other aspects of spiritual life:

As was shown in Charts Three and Four, being spiritually oriented to outreach through service is particularly correlated to being spiritually oriented toward outreach evangelism and a focus on others. This is demonstrated in Chart Eleven as well.

Net effects: which aspects of spiritual life are most related to engaging in outreach service?

For outreach service, the net effects after statistical controls match the correlative results. Increasing service is best accomplished by increasing a focus on others, evangelism, and a reflective spiritual orientation. (Full GLM results are in the appendix.)

Participants 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.

Chart Eleven: Outreach service spiritual orientation relation to spiritual life variables (r² values; all results are statistically significant)

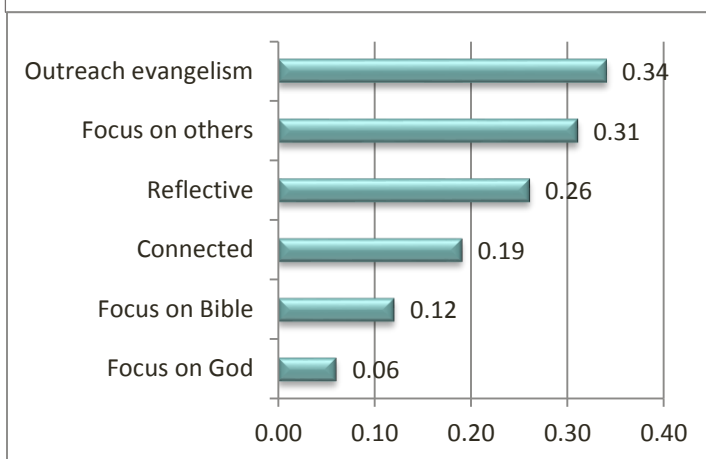
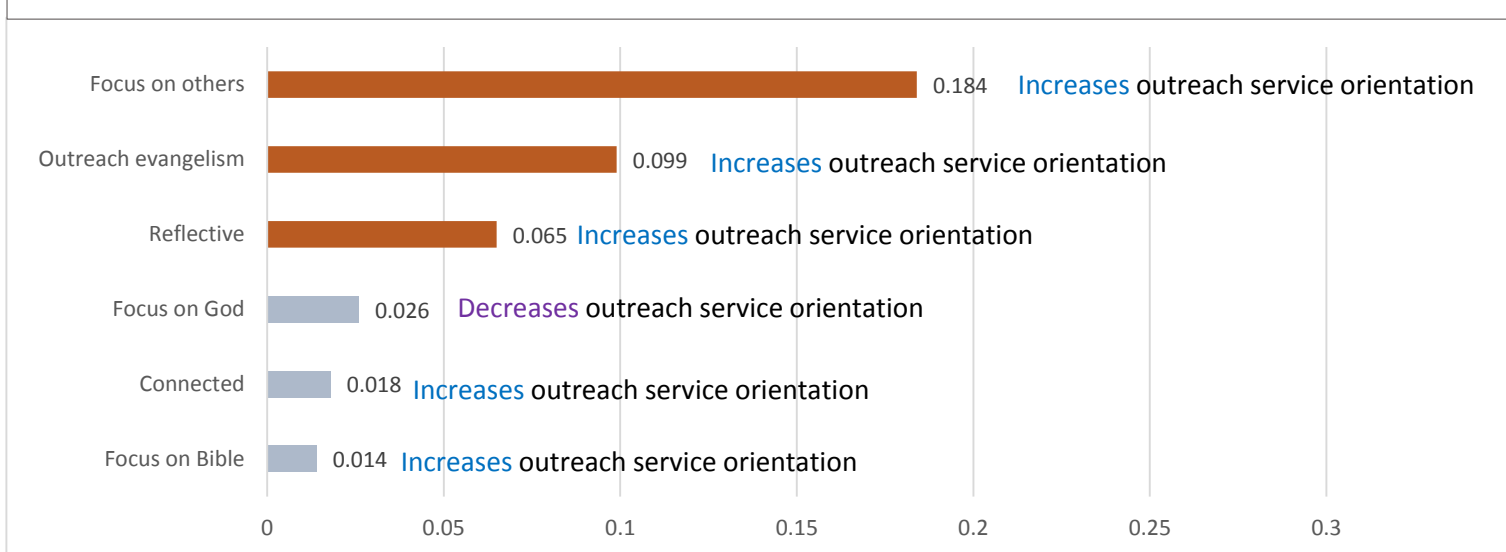


Chart Twelve: Net effects on outreach service (GLM partial η^2 values; all results are statistically significant)



Students' spiritual orientations: Factors that affect outreach evangelism

Participants 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.

Demographic effects:

Only two demographic variables affect students' engagement in evangelism. Both effects (from political view and major) are very small. (See Chart Thirteen.)

Relation to other aspects of spiritual life:

As was shown in Charts Three and Four, being spiritually oriented to outreach through evangelism is particularly correlated to being spiritually oriented toward outreach service. Evangelism is also moderately correlated with almost all other aspects of spiritual life as is shown in Chart Fourteen as well.

Net effects: which aspects of spiritual life are most related to engaging in outreach evangelism?

Chart Fourteen shows the net effects each aspect of spiritual life has on evangelism after statistically controlling for the others. The factor that is most likely to promote an engagement with evangelism is outreach service. (Full GLM results are in the appendix.)

Chart Thirteen: Outreach evangelism spiritual orientation relation to demographics (η^2 values; all results are statistically significant)

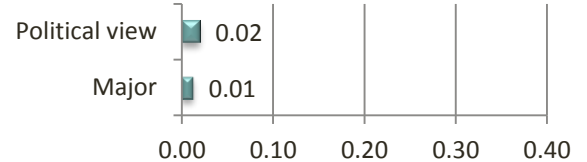


Chart Fourteen: Outreach evangelism spiritual orientation relation to spiritual life variables (r^2 values; all results are statistically significant)

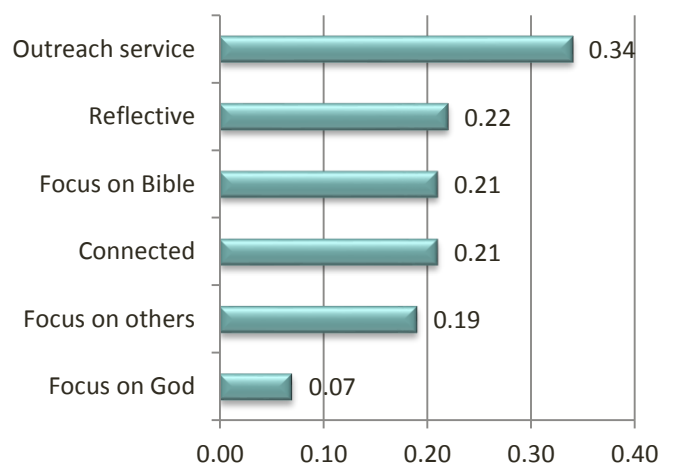
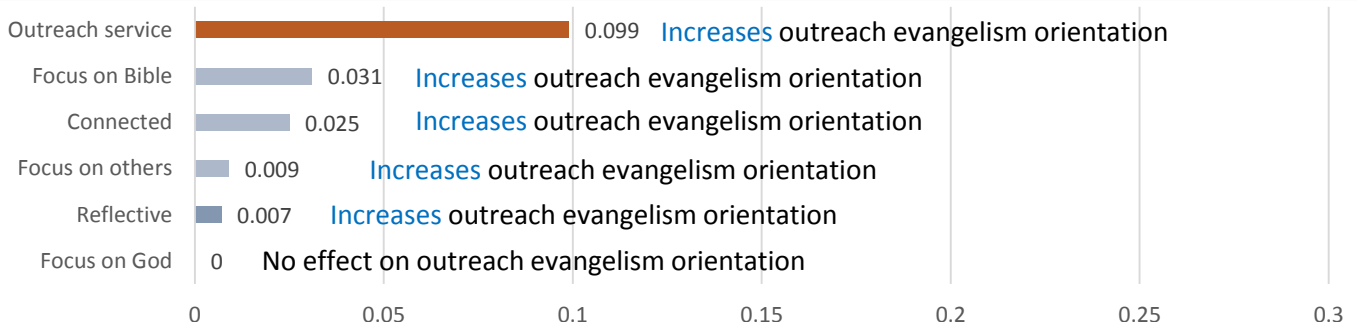


Chart Fifteen: Net effects on outreach service (GLM partial η^2 values; all results are statistically significant)



APPENDIX

General linear model results for a reflective spiritual orientation

Parameter Estimates

Dependent variable: Reflective

Parameter	B	Std. Error	t	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval		Partial Eta Squared
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound	
Intercept	.513	.112	4.596	.000	.294	.732	.003
Connected	.301	.012	24.911	.000	.277	.325	.081
Outreach service	.217	.010	22.140	.000	.198	.236	.065
Focus on Bible	.352	.018	19.185	.000	.316	.388	.049
Focus on God	.454	.028	16.203	.000	.400	.509	.036
Outreach evangelism	.053	.007	7.153	.000	.039	.068	.007
Focus on others	-.083	.023	-3.679	.000	-.127	-.039	.002

General linear model results for a connected spiritual orientation

Parameter Estimates

Dependent variable: Connected

Parameter	B	Std. Error	t	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval		Partial Eta Squared
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound	
Intercept	.427	.105	4.059	.000	.221	.634	.002
Focus on God	.692	.026	26.970	.000	.642	.742	.093
Reflective	.268	.011	24.911	.000	.247	.289	.081
Focus on Bible	.391	.017	22.787	.000	.357	.424	.068
Focus on others	-.287	.021	-13.660	.000	-.328	-.245	.026
Outreach evangelism	.094	.007	13.418	.000	.080	.107	.025
Outreach service	.108	.009	11.401	.000	.089	.127	.018

General linear model results for an outreach service spiritual orientation

Parameter Estimates

Dependent variable: Outreach service

Parameter	B	Std. Error	t	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval		Partial Eta Squared
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound	
Intercept	1.088	.130	8.353	.000	.833	1.344	.010
Focus on others	.954	.024	40.026	.000	.908	1.001	.184
Outreach evangelism	.232	.008	27.893	.000	.216	.249	.099
Reflective	.298	.013	22.140	.000	.272	.324	.065
Focus on God	-.452	.033	-13.703	.000	-.517	-.388	.026
Connected	.167	.015	11.401	.000	.138	.195	.018
Focus on Bible	-.218	.022	-9.959	.000	-.261	-.175	.014

General linear model results for an outreach evangelism spiritual orientation

Parameter Estimates

Dependent variable: Outreach evangelism

Parameter	B	Std. Error	t	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval		Partial Eta Squared
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound	
Intercept	-3.159	.173	-18.243	.000	-3.499	-2.820	.045
Outreach service	.426	.015	27.893	.000	.396	.455	.099
Focus on Bible	.446	.029	15.170	.000	.388	.503	.031
Connected	.265	.020	13.418	.000	.226	.303	.025
Focus on others	.288	.036	8.114	.000	.219	.358	.009
Reflective	.134	.019	7.153	.000	.097	.171	.007
Focus on God	-.004	.045	-.093	.926	-.093	.085	.000