

Holistic Integration

Christian Education as Spiritual Formation

Too often, Biblical integration asks what faith can add to a subject, which leads to shallow connections and leaves many disciplines with little to say beyond a few familiar themes. A better approach asks what each subject can do for personal formation. By drawing on the full range of Christian traditions and asking how each subject forms students, education becomes a unified practice of discipleship rather than a fragmented set of religious habits.

A Good Question Moving in the Wrong Direction

Too often, Biblical integration is reduced to asking, “What can my faith do for my subject?”

- What verses apply to (or parallel) my lesson?
- What spiritual lessons can make my lesson meaningful?
- What theological doctrine supports what I want to teach?

This framework works well, until it doesn't.

- This is why history and literature teachers have a great time doing Biblical integration.
- This is why science teachers are largely limited to talking about creation and Psalm 19:1-2.
- This is why math teachers struggle to find anything other than, order reflects God's character.

A Better Question Because of a Better Direction

Example: The math department at SCS asked, what kind of person does math require you to be?

This is a better question because it asks, “What can my subject do for my faith?”

The question positions education as a means of formation.

A more holistic approach is for teachers to think about subject areas as offering unique opportunities and resources for the formation of students.

Streams of Christianity

Richard Foster identifies six Streams of Christianity, each emphasizing a different aspect of Christian belief and practice. Each stream reflects a vital historical tradition within Christianity, offering a unique but complementary perspective on discipleship and spiritual formation. Foster argues that a well-rounded Christian life integrates all six streams, avoiding an imbalanced emphasis on one at the expense of the others. Together, these traditions give us a picture of a healthy spiritual life. They guide us into the way of Jesus, shaping us so that we begin to look like him. And in that process, we are changed from the inside out.

The Contemplative Stream	The Holiness Stream	The Charismatic Stream
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The prayer-filled life • Our attention on God • “Put simply, the contemplative life is the steady gaze of the soul upon the God who loves us.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The virtue-filled life • Our transformation in God • “We see in [Jesus] such deeply ingrained ‘holy habits’ that he is always ‘response-able,’ always able to respond appropriately. This is purity of heart. This is the virtuous life.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Spirit-filled life • Our empowerment by God • “Frankly, there are no ‘noncharismatic Christians’ ...the Christian life is by definition a life in and through the Spirit.”
The Social Justice Stream	The Evangelical Stream	The Incarnational Stream
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The compassion-filled life • Our expression of justice, compassion, and peace • “Love of God makes love of neighbor possible.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Word-centered life • Our declaration of the gospel of Jesus Christ • “This faith stream addresses the crying need for people to see the good news lived and hear the good news proclaimed.” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The sacramental life • Our recognition of the relationship between the spiritual and the physical • “Far from being evil, the physical is meant to be inhabited by the spiritual.”

The Streams in Christian Education

Most Christian schools have an institutional history, connecting them to a particular stream of Christianity.

For evangelical schools, “Biblical integration”/”BWV education” will focus on the emphasis of that stream—a Word-centered education.

However, this “siloeing” is too often to the neglect of the other aspects of the Christian life. The Christians involved are left unaware of the treasures they hold.

A more holistic approach is for teachers to think about subject areas as offering unique opportunities and resources for the formation of students.

Six fundamental questions every teacher can answer:

- **The Contemplative Question:** How does my subject help students attend to their inner life?
- **The Holiness Question:** How does my subject help students cultivate moral character?
- **The Evangelical Question:** How does my subject help students conform to God’s Word?
- **The Charismatic Question:** How does my subject help students surrender to the Holy Spirit?
- **The Incarnation Question:** How does my subject help students view all of life as sacred?
- **The Social Justice Question:** How does my subject help students love their neighbor well?

The goal is to be able to apply one of these questions to your lesson.

(i.e. How does this lesson help students...)

The value of each subject is that it forms students in ways that other subjects do not.

The following are suggestions for how each academic subject may answer each stream's question.

1. Computer and Technology

- **The Contemplative Question:** Technology can help students become aware of how their digital habits affect their inner life.
- **The Holiness Question:** Teaching responsible, ethical tech use trains integrity, discernment, and self-control.
- **The Evangelical Question:** Technology offers powerful tools to communicate the truth of Scripture and engage with biblical content.
- **The Charismatic Question:** Students can be taught to view creativity in tech as a response to the Spirit's leading.
- **The Incarnation Question:** The digital world is not disembodied or neutral. It is part of the created world where Christ's lordship still applies.
- **The Social Justice Question:** Technology equips students to serve others through innovation, accessibility tools, and advocacy.

2. English (Literature & Writing)

- **The Contemplative Question:** Literature invites students to reflect on the human condition, developing empathy and self-awareness through deep reading and personal writing.
- **The Holiness Question:** Stories of virtue and vice help students explore moral character and the consequences of choices, shaping their ethical discernment.
- **The Evangelical Question:** Engaging with biblical texts and faith-informed literature fosters alignment with God's truth and wisdom.
- **The Charismatic Question:** Writing and storytelling can be spaces where students sense the movement of the Holy Spirit, learning to express God-given inspiration.
- **The Incarnation Question:** English helps students see language as sacred, recognizing that words shape reality and that Christ, the Word, entered human history.
- **The Social Justice Question:** Literature exposes students to voices of the marginalized, equipping them to recognize injustice and advocate for truth and reconciliation.

3. Extracurricular Activities (Leadership, Clubs, Service Projects)

- **The Contemplative Question:** Extracurriculars provide spaces for students to explore their interests and purpose in God's calling.
- **The Holiness Question:** Leadership roles and team activities develop virtues like humility, responsibility, and perseverance.
- **The Evangelical Question:** Clubs and service projects provide opportunities for students to live out their faith and share it with others.
- **The Charismatic Question:** Stepping into new roles requires trust in the Spirit's guidance and provision.
- **The Incarnation Question:** Every activity—whether academic, athletic, or social—is part of God's holistic vision for human flourishing.
- **The Social Justice Question:** Service projects and outreach initiatives cultivate compassion and equip students to work for justice and mercy.

4. Fine Arts (Music, Visual Arts, Drama, Dance)

- **The Contemplative Question:** Creating and experiencing art fosters stillness, reflection, and deeper awareness of beauty and mystery.
- **The Holiness Question:** The discipline of artistic practice cultivates patience, excellence, and integrity, shaping moral character.
- **The Evangelical Question:** Art communicates truth in powerful, nonverbal ways, offering a medium for witnessing and engaging with Scripture creatively.
- **The Charismatic Question:** Artistic expression allows students to surrender to the Holy Spirit's movement, experiencing divine inspiration in creation.
- **The Incarnation Question:** The arts affirm that physical matter—paint, sound, movement—is infused with divine purpose, mirroring the incarnational nature of faith.
- **The Social Justice Question:** Art has historically been a prophetic voice for justice, calling communities to repentance, healing, and reconciliation.

5. History (Social Studies, Civics, Government, Economics)

- **The Contemplative Question:** Studying history allows students to reflect on the patterns of human behavior, God's providence, and the moral weight of choices.
- **The Holiness Question:** Historical examples of virtue and vice provide models for character formation and ethical leadership.
- **The Evangelical Question:** Understanding history through a biblical worldview helps students see God's hand at work and interpret culture in light of Scripture.
- **The Charismatic Question:** History reveals movements of God's Spirit across time, helping students recognize His ongoing work in the world.
- **The Incarnation Question:** Engaging with history teaches students that every era, culture, and human endeavor is part of God's redemptive story.
- **The Social Justice Question:** History exposes students to injustice and human suffering, equipping them to pursue justice, mercy, and reconciliation.

6. Languages (Foreign & Classical)

- **The Contemplative Question:** Learning a language requires patience and attentiveness, fostering deep listening and careful expression.
- **The Holiness Question:** Language study teaches humility and respect for different cultures, shaping moral character.
- **The Evangelical Question:** Understanding other languages opens doors for reading Scripture in its original form and for cross-cultural evangelism.
- **The Charismatic Question:** Learning a language involves surrendering control, mirroring the trust required to walk in step with the Spirit.
- **The Incarnation Question:** Language reflects God's incarnational nature—He speaks and communicates with humanity, meeting people in their linguistic and cultural contexts.
- **The Social Justice Question:** Language study helps students break barriers, fostering empathy and meaningful relationships across cultures.

7. Math

- **The Contemplative Question:** Mathematics reveals the order and structure of creation, inviting students to marvel at the precision and harmony in the universe.
- **The Holiness Question:** Math develops intellectual discipline, honesty, and problem-solving skills that build integrity.
- **The Evangelical Question:** The rational consistency of math reflects the trustworthiness of God's character and truth.
- **The Charismatic Question:** Discovering patterns in mathematics can be an experience of awe, surrendering to the mystery of God's infinite wisdom.
- **The Incarnation Question:** Mathematics affirms that physical reality is intelligible and structured, pointing to a divine Mind behind creation.
- **The Social Justice Question:** Math equips students to address societal issues—poverty, resource distribution, engineering solutions—that impact human flourishing.

8. Physical Education (Health, Sports, Movement)

- **The Contemplative Question:** Physical activity invites students to become aware of their bodies, fostering mindfulness and gratitude for their physical existence.
- **The Holiness Question:** Discipline, perseverance, and self-control in physical training mirror the pursuit of holiness.
- **The Evangelical Question:** The biblical view of the body as a temple shapes students' understanding of stewardship and self-care.
- **The Charismatic Question:** Movement and physical activity can become acts of worship, as seen in dance and corporate expressions of joy.
- **The Incarnation Question:** Jesus took on a physical body, affirming the goodness of embodied existence and physical well-being.
- **The Social Justice Question:** Sports teach teamwork, fair play, and concern for others, shaping students for servant-leadership.

9. Science

- **The Contemplative Question:** Science instills wonder as students explore the vastness and intricacy of creation.
- **The Holiness Question:** Scientific integrity—honesty in research, stewardship of the earth—forms moral character.
- **The Evangelical Question:** Understanding the natural world enhances appreciation for the Creator's design, reinforcing biblical truths.
- **The Charismatic Question:** Discovering new knowledge in science can be an experience of awe and spiritual insight.
- **The Incarnation Question:** The study of creation reminds students that God cares deeply about the physical world.
- **The Social Justice Question:** Science equips students to address human needs—medicine, environmental stewardship, technology—for the good of others.