

Spiritual Life at Oaks Christian School Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

General

1. Do you have to be a Christian to attend Oaks Christian School (OCS)?

There is no faith requirement to become a student at OCS. No matter how students arrive at OCS, our hope is to introduce them to Jesus Christ and to encourage them to follow Him. We acknowledge and respect the fact that it is every person's right to make their own decision to accept and follow Christ. We do, however, highly recommend that students who enter Oaks Christian have either a passionate desire to seek Christ, or at least an open mind and heart.

2. What is the percentage of students at OCS who are Christian?

While we recognize that it can be challenging for students to self-define their faith, our overall aim is to have 75% of our student body comprised of students who are *sincere* and *engaged* in their faith in Jesus Christ. Hopefully their view of what that means will be expanded upon during their experience at OCS. Currently, based on a survey conducted in the Spring of 2017, students self-reported between 20-30% of our student body (with some variance in grade level) who are sincere in their faith in Jesus Christ.

3. What is the percentage of teachers at OCS who are Christian?

While students do not need to enter OCS with a faith requirement, all of our faculty and staff do. We are committed Christians from a variety of backgrounds and traditions. All employees sign a statement of faith as part of their application process.

4. What other faith backgrounds are represented among students?

Our student body, though not equally diverse, is comprised of students and families of other faith backgrounds, including Jewish, Hindu, Buddhist, Muslim, and others. We have an international student program that brings students to us from a variety of cultural and religious backgrounds. Students of other faiths are welcomed and are considered for enrollment at OCS. We do explain to those families from the onset that while there is respect and tolerance for people of other faiths, we will be clearly leading and teaching from and toward the Christian faith.

5. What is the breakdown of denominations among Oaks Christian families?

We have a variety of different denominations represented by our families. The majority of the Christian families at OCS represent various protestant & evangelical traditions.

What is the breakdown of denominations among Oaks Christian faculty and staff? We have a variety of different denominations represented by our faculty and staff. We have protestant and Catholic traditions represented, though we teach primarily from the protestant tradition when they differ.

6. Is the school affiliated with Calvary Community Church?

OCS is not affiliated with Calvary Community Church, although we share a rich history and partnership in the formation of the school, as well as a rich relationship as neighbors who share facilities on a regular basis.

7. How does the school define “Christian”?

In the admission and hiring process, OCS defines “Christian” in terms of some of the core beliefs outlined in our Statement of Faith:

- WE BELIEVE the Bible to be the inspired and only infallible word of God.
- WE BELIEVE that there is only one God, eternally existent in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
- WE BELIEVE that mankind was created good, but lost the hope of life eternal, destroyed his communion with God, and fell under the bondage of sin and death by rebelling against God’s perfect way of life.
- WE BELIEVE that Jesus Christ is God’s eternal Son, who redeemed mankind. As true God and true man, He was born of a virgin through the Holy Spirit, taught men how to live through His sinless life, took the consequences of our sin upon Himself in His passion and death upon the Cross, arose bodily from the dead on the third day after His death, was seen by His disciples, ascended to the right hand of the Father and will return in power and glory.
- WE BELIEVE that all are sinners, that all are called to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ, that no one can come to the Father except through Jesus Christ and that no one can come to faith in Christ, repent and attain holiness, but by the grace of God.
- WE BELIEVE that the Holy Spirit is freely given to those who believe in Jesus Christ, that the fruits and benefits of Christ’s redemption are applied to us individually by the Holy Spirit, and that the Holy Spirit lives in us and enables us to live godly lives.
- WE BELIEVE that at the end of the age there will be two resurrections: one to eternal life and glory, the other to eternal condemnation.

8. How do we view the Bible at OCS?

The Bible is the infallible, authoritative and inspired Word of God, which reveals God’s truth and is our guide for faith and practice. We believe in the continuity of the Old and New Testaments and that both are to be understood in light of each other. The Bible contains God’s unfolding redemption narrative and calls us to participate in God’s ongoing work in the world. The Bible is living and active, accomplishing the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit.

The Bible guides us to the belief that God’s truth is not merely subjective or relative to an individual, group or society, but that it is objective and universally true. To hold to a nonrelativistic

view of truth does not equate with being intolerant. Tolerance does not mean that everyone has an equal claim to truth and thus no one view can be the right one, but it means that one can hold one's view and allow others to hold theirs while enjoying the freedom of discussion leading to a better understanding of the truth.

9. How do we approach the differences among various Christian denominations?

“In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, charity.” (Richard Baxter)

We approach this issue by placing the focus on Jesus and the Bible. When presenting similarities and differences among the different branches of the Christian tree (Roman Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant) we do so in a fair, accurate and informational way. We acknowledge at the outset the commonality shared through the early creeds of the Church, namely the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds. When discussing differences, we root them in their historical context to explain the reasons for the development of distinct doctrines.

Our goal as a school is not to gather around one theological tradition, but to instruct and inform. While we rely on the Bible as the only authority, we practice hospitality to those with other views of the Bible. To extend the metaphor of hospitality: we prepare the menu and set the table and invite others to eat at the table.

10. How do we discuss issues regarding eternal judgment?

We approach this topic with humility and honesty, and share above all else, God's desire for His children to know Him. We describe the God of the Scriptures as one who is just and good. We focus upon the fact that to know Christ is to know life and we challenge students to know Christ in this life to be assured of their presence with Him in eternity. We point to the claims of the Scriptures, which reveal that heaven is Christ-centered. We recognize that we are not God, and withhold judgment regarding anybody's salvation. Above all, we recognize that, because of the volatile nature of the issue and how easy it is to be misunderstood in these matters, we recognize that *how* this is discussed is as important as *what* is said. Therefore, we prefer follow-up Q & A sessions with smaller groups of students or one-on-one conversations when this topic arises. We encourage students to examine the claims of Christ for themselves.

11. How do we approach the relationship between the Christian faith and Judaism in particular?

We point to the Jewish faith as the roots of our family tree. We respect and celebrate the Judeo-Christian heritage and values. We humbly revere all that God revealed about Himself through the Old Testament. We share history, values and morals with the Jewish faith. We neither coerce nor diminish students of Jewish faith. We do believe and are compelled to teach Jesus Christ as the Messiah promised

throughout the Scriptures. We respectfully invite everyone to “come and see” Jesus, the Savior, not just of Christians, but of the world.

Academic

1. How is Christianity integrated into the classroom on a daily basis?

Our faith is not something that we force to integrate, as if it does not naturally belong to all parts of our life. It is integral, and we teach it as such throughout all of our departments. We believe that this allows us to teach more completely with awe and reverence in all subjects. We believe that God is revealed in art, the sciences, mathematics, throughout history, etc. We make connections and integrate between the various disciplines.

2. Why are Bible classes and Spiritual Life one department?

Our faith is integral to all parts of our life. Our Spiritual Life classes and programs are linked together to create space for our students to both learn about and engage with God and the life into which they are being invited. We are one department, but more than that, we are one school in this aspect: our learning about God and our faithful response to Him are linked together.

3. Are Bible classes and Chapel mandatory?

Yes. Because of our core values and self-understanding as a Christian preparatory school, we understand that our community life is shaped by our communal experience as we study the Scriptures and are mutually encouraged in our pursuit of God together.

4. In Bible classes and other academic areas, are students free to question and debate issues--from spiritual matters to educational ones?

We encourage all of our students to become well-educated people who think for themselves, and to know how to discuss and debate on their path to knowledge and wisdom. Healthy and respectful dialogue and debate are important tools on the educational journey.

5. Does Oaks Christian teach about and respect other world religions?

At Oaks Christian School we teach faith in God through Jesus Christ, and we teach using the Scriptures as our guide. As we encourage students to build their own worldview, we examine and critique all religions, including the Christian faith. We study and examine other religions as we discuss history, worldviews, and our own faith. To clarify, we study other religions, but we teach the Christian faith.

6. How does OCS approach the behavioral expectations of their students? The OCS community chooses, freely and willingly, to impose upon itself rules for behavior which serve both the long-range interests of the school and the immediate good of its individual members. While we do not view these expectations as an index to maturity in Christ, we do regard violations as a serious breach of integrity

within the community because each member has voluntarily chosen to associate with the Oaks community and to accept its standards. Oaks views behavioral standards as a necessary component for any healthy community and thus, will hold our students accountable to those standards regardless of religious affiliation. While we do not wish to impose faith on students,

7. What is a Christian worldview?

A worldview is like a set of lenses through which we perceive the world around us. Our worldview is formed by our education, our upbringing, the culture we live in, the books we read, the media and movies we absorb, etc. For many people their worldview is simply something they have absorbed by osmosis from their surrounding cultural influences. They may have never thought strategically about what they believe and may not be able to give a rational defense of their beliefs to others.

A Christian worldview is consistent and cohesive with Biblical revelation. We believe that God exists¹ and that He is the standard by which we measure everything else. God created everything that exists² and everything is held together by Him³. We believe the Bible is God's divinely inspired Word, revealed to mankind⁴. We believe that the fullness of God came to earth and lived in the human body of Jesus Christ of Nazareth 2,000 years ago⁵. We believe that mankind chose to rebel against God in the Garden of Eden and because of that act of rebellion, sin and death entered the world⁶. We believe that believing in⁷ and obeying⁸ Jesus Christ is the only way to have eternal life or to be reunited with God⁹.

8. What is your Bible curriculum?

6th Grade: Foundations 1—an overview of the entire Biblical revelation

Bible Foundations 1 is an introductory course introducing students to the foundational doctrines of the Bible. The goal of the course is to provide students with a framework from which to understand the Scriptures. This course also includes a survey of the historical developments of how, when and why the Bible came into existence.

¹ Heb. 11:6

² Gen.1:1

³ Col. 1:17

⁴ 2 Tim. 3:16

⁵ Col. 1:19

⁶ Rom. 5:12-14

⁷ John 3:15-19, 5:24

⁸ Luke 8:21, John 3:20, John 14:21, 23-24

⁹ Acts 4:10-12

7th Grade: Foundations 2—The Life and Teachings of Jesus Christ

The primary objective for this course is to introduce students to the life and teachings of Jesus Christ through the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Students will attain a clearer understanding of the deity of Jesus, the kingdom of God, and the reason for and significance of Christ's suffering on the cross and resurrection. Study of the parables, the Beatitudes, and Christ's miracles will also be examined. Students will be encouraged to grow in knowledge and in spiritual depth as they uncover the love and power of our risen Lord.

8th Grade: Foundations 3*—Life in Christ: A Study Through the Book and Themes of the Acts of the Apostles

*This course is in development. It will be a tour through the book of Acts of the Apostles, focusing upon some of the following core themes:

- Characteristics of the early Church
- Priorities of the early Church
- Early Church issues and challenges
- Justice, compassion and mercy
- The kingdom of God on earth
- Paul's missionary journeys

9th Grade: The story of Christianity

This foundational course will help students gain an overall appreciation of what the story of the Bible is and where it came from historically along with a look at its resourceful and reliable input into their daily lives. The students will spend a considerable amount of time exploring the story and narrative of the Old Testament which paves the way for an insightful understanding of who Jesus Christ is along with what he offers humanity and how humanity should respond to who He is and what He has done.

10th Grade: New Testament Survey

A one-semester survey course which briefly covers the intertestamental period prior to the events of the New Testament, the life of Christ, the teachings of Christ, the beginnings of the early church, the teachings of the apostles as recorded in the epistles of the New Testament, and the account of the end times as provided by the book of Revelation.

11th Grade: Living the Story

We will focus on the art and science of biblical interpretation and Bible study skills. The first semester will begin with the study of imago dei – what it means to be made in God's image. The class will then focus on God's purpose for family and relationships, hermeneutics, a study of the Psalms, gain wisdom from the Proverbs, and learn how to avoid the seven deadly sins.

The course will accentuate the practical ways the lessons learned can teach us how to live well.

12th Grade: Senior Seminar—Christian Worldview

The Bible teaches Christians to “always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have” (1 Peter 3:15). The aim of the course is to encourage students to think seriously about and construct their own personal philosophy of life and to learn how to articulate it and live by it. Students will learn the beliefs of essential historic Christianity as presented in the Bible, the Apostles’ and Nicene Creeds; as well as aberrations of orthodox Christianity. They will become familiar and conversant with other major world views of our time and how they interact with Christianity. As they encounter the questions, challenges, and ideas of its critics first hand, they will learn an articulated and well-reasoned defense for the Christian faith. At the end of the course, students will be given guidelines and structures to assist them in formulating a statement of their own world view.

9. What is spiritual formation?

Spiritual formation is a general term referring to all attempts, means, instructions, and disciplines intended towards deepening of faith and furtherance of spiritual growth. It includes educational endeavors as well as the spiritual disciplines that shape the heart and will of the person. Our Spiritual Life courses are designed in such a way as to educate the student as well as to help the student engage with God.

Spiritual Plan

1. As a Christian school what is your explicit goal with my student?

For each of our students, our goal is to:

1. Foster an understanding of the sovereignty of God which provides a framework for the application of knowledge.
2. Provide a comprehensive and college preparatory education through diverse learning experiences within an engaging community.
3. Provide a challenging learning environment that fosters critical thinking, personal responsibility, and persistent effort.
4. Refine our bodies and character through teamwork and in competition that honors God.
5. Develop an understanding and appreciation of the arts, and encourage good stewardship of our artistic abilities.

6. Encourage a passion to love God and others through living lives that reflect the virtues taught and modeled by Christ including justice, wisdom, courage, service, reconciliation, grace, and humility.

2. How do students with no prior training become oriented to Bible curriculum and Christian activities?

We endeavor to orient all new students to the Spiritual Life at Oaks. We have time specifically set aside in order to orient all students in this regard.

3. What if my student wants to accept and begin to follow Christ?

We will encourage them in any way that we can, to the degree that they are comfortable, and will encourage their open communication with their family.