

The teachFASTly.com resources are not intended as a complete curriculum. The activities are designed to be woven into your existing teaching. This Quick Stop Lesson Plan is therefore not a single lesson plan, but rather a quick way of exploring the themes of an activity map. It includes one Discover activity, one Delve activity, and one Debrief activity. Together, these may take more than a class period, and you may want to add other activities between them. For more information visit www.teachfastly.com.

CHRISTIAN VIEWS OF CREATION

The purpose of this activity map is to briefly explore the different views held by Christians regarding evolution, creation, and the age of the Earth. The activity map is not intended to promote any one view or to cover all the related science. It focuses on helping students understand the contours of each view and to explore how understanding the views of others relates to the practice of loving God with our minds and loving our neighbors in the midst of disagreements.

The activity map has three primary goals: (1) To encourage students to see that Christians with differing views of science and faith questions agree on a number of critical issues: the Bible is God's Word and can be trusted, God created the universe, humans are unique in bearing God's image, and creation shows God's glory. (2) To keep truth and love connected throughout all discussions of origins and that truth does matter even though there is disagreement not only about particular ideas about origins, but also about how essential questions of origins are to faith. (3) To encourage students to treat others who disagree with them in ways that promote love of God and love of neighbor, and to fully engage them in an initial exploration of different views that Christians hold regarding how and when God created.

It is recommended that work on this topic be coordinated between science and Bible teachers, and that good communication with parents be practiced.

This Quick Stop Lesson Plan on **Christian Views of Creation** contains the following activities and attachments from www.teachfastly.com, which are combined for your ease of use in a downloadable ZIP file:

DISCOVER Activity: Agreeing and Disagreeing

Activity Attachment

- *Agreeing and Disagreeing PowerPoint*

DELVE Activity: Meet the Cast

Activity Attachments

- *Meet the Cast Student Handout*
- *Meet the Cast Script*
- *Meet the Cast Key*

DEBRIEF Activity: Who Would Say That?

Activity Attachment

- *Who Would Say That? Student Handout*

DISCOVER

Activity: Agreeing and Disagreeing

Time: 15 Minutes

In Brief

By secondary school most students are aware that Christians agree about many things and disagree about others. This activity sets Christian agreement and disagreement about creation in that broader context and relates it to love of God and neighbor.

Goals

Students will consider areas of Christian agreement and disagreement and reflect on their relationship to love of God and neighbor.

Thinking Ahead

The goal of this activity is to potentially reduce harmful tension about science and faith issues by reminding students that Christians, while genuinely disagreeing on whether certain issues are essential to faith, find a common point of reference in teachings such as the Apostles' Creed. Students may disagree as to whether these points of contention are acceptable or not. This activity merely recognizes that they exist, and therefore helps students to see that disagreements about science and faith are not unique. The focus of this activity, as of the whole activity map, is on how Christians must promote love of God and neighbor while they both agree and disagree. This is a key emphasis in teaching FASTly. Consider how engaging students in reflecting on this perspective might have implications for your classroom practices, the kind of ethos you foster, the expectations you communicate, and how disagreement is to be expressed.

As you embark on teaching about origins, it is recommended that work on this topic be coordinated between science and Bible teachers, and you practice good communication with parents.

Preparing the Activity

Needed: PowerPoint slide of the Apostles' Creed *Agreeing and Disagreeing*

Teaching the Activity

Ask the class to suggest several beliefs that all Christians hold. Take several suggestions but do not extend the discussion.

Display the Apostles' Creed, or alternatively display Bible passages that have been widely taken as central to orthodox Christian faith such as Romans 10:9 and 1 Corin-

thians 15:3-4. For students unfamiliar with the Apostles' Creed, point out that this statement of belief has been used by many Christian traditions since before 400 AD. Most Christians in most places agree with these beliefs because they help to define what it is that Christians hold in common. Note that this creed does not cover every important subject. For example, it does not mention beliefs about the Bible. It offers a core, not an exhaustive list.

Ask students as they read the Apostles' Creed to count the number of distinct items listed about which Christians agree. The exact number is unimportant. The point of this exercise is to note how broadly we agree about a range of foundational issues.

Now ask students to work with those seated around them and list some matters which people who affirm the Apostle's Creed might still disagree about. These would be doctrines and practices that vary among churches. Do not spend time discussing each item mentioned, and do not allow students to belittle views they do not hold. If the class needs a prompt, suggest modes of baptism. Some churches baptize infants, others only baptize individuals who have made a public profession of faith, while others do both. Some churches baptize by sprinkling with water, others by pouring, and others by immersion. Students might mention other differences such as views on the events surrounding Jesus' return, whether women may be pastors, the use of special vestments by clergy, the use of music in worship, whether clergy may marry, etc.

Conclude the discussion by pointing out that Christians agree about many important things but also have different views about other things. The idea that Christians disagree about everything and that we all basically believe the same way are both too simple. This means that Christian faith involves living with differences as fellow believers. Note that part of the difficulty here is that we may also disagree about which questions are truly central and essential and which are secondary. How and when God created are two important areas where Christians disagree, including disagreeing about how central these questions are to faith. Nevertheless, if we disagree, it is important to do so in a way that is motivated by, and evidences, love for God and love for each other (Matthew 22:37-40). As we grow in love, we hopefully may find that we also become better at pursuing truth together.

Attachments Needed

Agreeing and Disagreeing PowerPoint

DELVE

Activity: Meet the Cast

Time: 45 Minutes

In Brief

This activity engages students in comparing the views of Christians holding three general positions: young-earth creation, old-earth creation, and evolutionary creation. Other positions exist but these three broad categories offer a way into the landscape of the discussion. The activity might take two normal class periods, but it will be a memorable lesson.

Goals

Students will understand key elements of three major Christian views of origins. Students will understand that agreement and disagreement are both part of debates about origins.

Thinking Ahead

Thoughtful Christians hold conflicting views about questions of origins. Teaching FASTly invites students to explore them with a concern for truth, yet without animosity. This activity is intended to humanize Christians in all three camps. This activity is not designed to persuade students to accept or reject a particular view, or to cover all of the relevant scientific arguments and evidence, but to help them see that genuine disagreement can be accompanied by respect. This does not mean we pretend that the issues do not really matter. The different groups represented disagree quite strongly on some key issues and believe that those disagreements matter to faith and truth. Some students may already have strong feelings about these matters, or may find aspects of certain views especially appealing or threatening.

Encourage students to wait until later in the activity map to explore questions that might extend or emotionally charge the discussion. Do not allow the activity to become a debate about which view is correct. The activity primarily calls for the practice of careful listening and fair representation. Remember that whatever view you hold, in helping students understand the other views, you may be helping them understand a friend, acquaintance, pastor, teacher, or family member. Familiarity with all three views is helpful for leading this activity and answering student questions.

Three helpful books that compare different Christian views about how and when God created are *Three Views on Creation and Evolution*, edited by J. P. Moreland and John Mark Reynolds (Zondervan, 1999); *Origins: A Reformed Look at Creation, Design, and*

Evolution, revised edition, by Deborah B. and Loren D. Haarsma (Faith Alive, 2011); and *Four Views on The Historical Adam*, edited by Matthew Barrett and Ardel B. Caneday (Zondervan, 2013).

Note that the view known as “Intelligent Design” is not included here because it is not necessarily a Christian position and is difficult to include clearly on this spectrum. Aspects of Intelligent Design may be held by both Young Earth and Old Earth Creationists, and it is debated whether it really belongs to natural science or to philosophy.

If you wish, you could expand the cast to include a representative of atheistic evolution, making clear the distinction between this view and evolutionary creationism.

Preparing the Activity

Needed: handout for each student ***Meet the Cast Student Handout***, a simple costume change for each of the three roles you will play such as different hats and jackets, and a name badge identifying the view (“Dr. E. volution” or “Dr. Eva Lution”); teacher script ***Meet the Cast Script*** and ***Meet the Cast Key***.

Teaching the Activity

Tell the class that this lesson will explore different views that Christians hold regarding how and when God created. Give each student the handout ***Meet the Cast Student Handout***. Announce that they will welcome three “guest speakers.” Each of them is a scientist and a Christian and believes God made everything, but they have differing views about how and when. The students’ responsibility is to listen carefully and fill in the information for each speaker’s view on the handout.

Tell the class that you will go get the first speaker. Step briefly into the hallway and put on the costume. Step to the front of the class, introduce yourself, and use the handout as an outline for explaining your view. Writing words on the board is helpful and can be made part of the act.

Emphasize the things that unite you and the other two speakers and be gracious about how your view differs, modeling love of God and neighbor (Matthew 22:37-40). Be careful not to imply superiority or inferiority of one of the views through tone of voice or dismissive body language or odd costume choices. Aim to represent each speaker in a way they would appreciate. It works well to pretend that “all four of you” know and enjoy each other while maintaining that your differences are strongly held and important to you.

When it is time to leave, thank the class, excuse yourself, and change quickly for the next role. When all three “guests” have spoken, return as yourself and be sure students have completed and understood the handout. Mention that there are other positions on

origins that Christians take and that the ones presented are just three examples.

Have students review and think about their notes, looking at how science is approached and how each view could promote love of God and neighbor. Discuss the following questions with the class in closing and/or collect written responses from students to assess understanding of the key points of agreement and disagreement.

- What did you find *most* and *least* convincing about each view?
- How do think each view promotes *love* (for God and others)?
- What do the three views have in common?
- What dangers does each view see in the other views?

Option: Substitute actual guest speakers for your role play if you know one or more individuals who hold different views about creation, who can communicate with students, and—most importantly—who are gracious and respectful toward those holding other views. Allow more time if you invite real guests and be sure each has a copy of the student worksheet and understands their role in helping students fill it in.

Attachments Needed

Meet the Cast Student Handout

Meet the Cast Script

Meet the Cast Key

DEBRIEF

Activity: Who Would Say That?

Time: 15 Minutes

In Brief

In this activity students match fictitious quotations with the Christian view of creation whose advocates would agree with the quotation, or with “none” if no Christian would agree with it. The purpose is to engage students in reviewing the similarities and differences among Christian views of creation.

Goals

Students will be able to match a range of belief statements to major Christian positions on origins.

Thinking Ahead

Prepare for how you will lead the closing discussion of this activity which fulfilled two purposes. On the one hand the activity offers a tool for checking whether students have understood some of the differences between broad Christian positions on origins. On the other hand, it creates an opportunity to remind students that the positions of real people are often more varied and complex than broad labels and stereotypes can capture. Work through the questions yourself and see if there are any places where you would want to phrase things differently, or have doubts about a statement that might otherwise seem to fit your position. This will allow you to share personally with the students about the limitations of such a list. Think about how to communicate to students that viewing others charitably, in the context of love of neighbor, can involve both trying to understand their position and realizing that they are real, complex people and so they are more than their position. Adopting this holistic approach is part of teaching FASTly. The goal of this learning is not to have everyone in a neat category, but merely to have some means of navigating a starting point for listening well to others.

Note that an answer key is not included in this activity. There are two reasons for this. First, some Christians hold views that combine aspects of these three broad views, so there might be more than one justifiable way of answering. Second, the main value of this activity is the student involvement in thinking about the views and their implications, for example figuring out that only YECs would be likely to believe that humans and dinosaurs lived at the same time. Discussing multiple possible answers can further deepen learning.

Preparing the Activity

Needed for each student: handout *Who Would Say That?*

Teaching the Activity

Distribute the handout and explain that it contains a list of fictitious quotations representing various Christian views about origins. Explain the acronyms (*YEC: Young Earth Creationist, OEC: Old Earth Creationist, EC: Evolutionary Creationist*) and instruct students to label each individual quotation with the acronyms for any groups that would agree with the statement, or with the words “All” or “None” if all or none would agree with it. Alternatively, work through the questions orally as a class.

If students worked individually, ask them to share their responses. If there are divergent answers, tell the class that doesn't necessarily mean that some of them made mistakes, and ask them why that might be so. Point out to them that the acronyms represent three broad types, and the views of individuals are often more complex and varied than these labels can capture. Discuss why it might be harmful to assume that the views of others are too tidy and fixed. Ask if anything on the sheet surprised anyone.

Attachments Needed

Who Would Say That? Student Handout