

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.

Science and the Internet

Many discussions, debates, and declamations regarding the relationship between faith and science take place not in the careful prose of scholarly conferences and research articles, but in online arguments. The internet serves as a major source of information and misinformation for most students. Students will go on gleaning ideas about faith and science from internet sources long after they leave the school classroom. They need to learn not only how to be cautious with online sources, but how to find trustworthy sources and accept valid findings.

- Can we teach them some necessary discernment skills as they navigate the online ocean of claims and counterclaims?
- Can we help them to become wiser consumers of internet information about faith and science?

This Activity Map aims to help students explore different ways that science and the internet intersect, challenging our ability to seek truth. The activities cover topics such as: Google searching, discerning reputable sources, how others perceive us online, and pornography. The activities are designed to help students see that engaging faithfully with online information demands complex skills and careful practices.

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 **Science and the Internet** 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: Are You My Neighbor?

Activity Attachment

- *Are You My Neighbor Slideshow*

DELVE Activity: Ask the Class

Activity Attachment

- *Ask the Class Handout*

DEBRIEF Activity: Spread the Word

Activity Attachment

- *List of Virtues Handout*

DISCOVER

Activity: Are You My Neighbor?

Time: 30 minutes

In Brief

The goal of this activity is to help students see how online behavior calls for concern not only for truth, but also for relational virtues. Students view video clips exemplifying online behavior that is not aligned with Christian values, and engage in constructing a more virtuous response.

Goals

Students will understand the connection between Christian faith, courteous and peaceable behavior towards others, and online commenting.

Thinking Ahead

If you have ever read the comments section under a controversial news article, blog, or social media post, then you will have seen how the anonymity of the internet can encourage commenters to say things they would never dream of saying in a face-to-face setting. Christians are called to care about truth, and also to image God in every interaction with others, whether face-to-face or online. If a preoccupation with being right and winning debates overrides our calling to model peace, kindness, and love of neighbor, then the picture presented is not consistent with the New Testament's picture of faith.

Consider your own online practices before addressing this with students:

- Are they consistent with your person-to-person behavior in other contexts?
- How can you model good choices for your students?

Preparing the Activity

Needed:

- Internet access to show two online video clips
- Projection for slides from **Are You My Neighbor Slideshow**

Teaching the Activity

Give students some background on Richard Dawkins:

Richard Dawkins is an evolutionary biologist and outspoken atheist, who has made his understanding of evolution central to his case against religion. He consistently criticizes religious belief, particularly the Christian religion, and is, in turn, regularly challenged by Christians. His best-selling book, *The God Delusion*, offers his opinion on why God doesn't exist and Christianity is false.

In the following video clips, Richard Dawkins reads a hate mail letter from someone claiming to be a Christian. The second link has bleeped-out words as Dawkins reads his letters. Play one or both clips:

- Richard Dawkins Reads Hate Mail [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SGZFJW-4ZqP0&feature=youtu.be>]
- Richard Dawkins Reads His Hate Mail [<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WYs-REU906fw>]

Introduce the idea of an “ad hominem” attack—one that attacks the person (“you are stupid”), instead of engaging the ideas with which we disagree (“I think that view is mistaken because...”).

Divide students into small groups. Ask them to discuss whether it is acceptable to use personally abusive language if addressing someone whose views seem wrong, and whether such a choice is consistent with professing Christian faith.

After allowing some time for initial discussion, display Slide 1 of **Are You My Neighbor Slideshow**, which shows the text of Titus 3:1-6. Ask students to identify based on the text:

- Who is included among those towards whom Christians are called to be peaceable and gentle?
- Would this include critics of religion and people with opposing views?
- What specific virtues are we urged to practice in this passage?
- How are these virtues related to salvation according to this passage—are they a secondary matter, or part of the logic of being Christian?
- What is the relationship between being right and being good?

You can use Slide 2 in **Are You My Neighbor Slideshow** to help students see key connections in the passage.

Ask students whether the virtues listed in this passage prevent us from disagreeing with people, or speaking up when we think harmful ideas are being communicated. How can we disagree while still treating others as our neighbors? Discuss specific verbal strategies for disagreeing courteously, such as:

- I am unable to agree with your view that...
- My reasons for taking a different position are...
- I hope that you will consider the following...

Ask students to craft a brief letter to Richard Dawkins in response to the video clips. The letters should identify what is problematic about the letters he read aloud, and model a more courteous tone. The point is not to address his scientific views, about which students may know little, but to practice a different kind of Christian response. It may not be appropriate to send the letters if students have not actually encountered Dawkins’ ideas and are only responding second-hand, but articulating a response to the clips provides practice in responding constructively.

DELVE

Activity: Ask the Class

Time: Extended

In Brief

This activity aims to support student-adult conversations about science and faith and to draw those conversations into the life of the science class. It engages students in eliciting a question that relates to science and faith from a parent or another adult, and investigating possible answers.

Goals

Students will find out what questions a parent or another adult has about faith and science.

Students will conduct investigations with the purpose of helping their adult conversation partner with their questions.

Thinking Ahead

This activity aims to do two things: give students experience in purposeful online investigation of faith and science questions, and stimulate conversation between students and an adult conversation partner about learning taking place in the classroom.

If you plan to regularly involve parents and other adults in homework activities, it is advisable to communicate with them about why this is happening early in the school year, so that expectations are clear. (See the Activity Maps on Engaging Parents and Homework.)

Be sure to give multiple nights for this assignment, so that students have time to schedule with their adult conversation partner and conduct the activity.

As you prepare for this activity, consider how you see the role of parents or adult guardians in relation to students' learning:

- Are parents or adult guardians there to help monitor deadlines?
- Are they potential sources of complaints who must be kept happy?
- Can key relationships provide a rich context of learning?
- What do school practices imply about the relational context of learning?

Preparing the Activity

Needed:

- A copy for each student of **Ask the Class Handout**

Teaching the Activity

Early in the semester or school year, tell students that they are going to research a question that a parent or another adult has about faith and science, and the possible answers.

For homework, assign students to have a conversation with at least one parent or another adult. The goal is to discover one question that the parent or adult conversation partner has about some aspect of science, or how the world works, and how this relates to faith. The question should be specific enough to investigate. It may be helpful to let students know that if the first person they talk with has no questions, they will need to find a second conversation partner.

As you give students instructions for this assignment, focus explicitly on how important it is for them to be gracious in the conversation they have with their parent or adult conversation partner. Ask students to name specific behaviors that could communicate lack of grace in learning, such as eye rolling in response to a question that seems foolish. Make explicit that students should not, at this point, offer an answer to the question, even if they believe they have a good answer.

In the next class period, have students form groups of three, and share their questions. Each group is now responsible for investigating their three questions. Assign a deadline, and tell students that they must prepare a report on their three questions. Encourage students to use online resources, but emphasize the following ground rules:

- Each online source should be assessed for credibility, and documented. Ask students to rate the reliability of the source and give reasons why they think it may be reliable.
- Each finding from an online source should be checked against other sources, which could include other reputable online sources, teachers, and library resources. Tell students to avoid basing a conclusion on a single web page. Also instruct students to look for similar wording on multiple websites, and to avoid using a second site for corroboration, when it is really another posting of the same source material.
- Where more than one view is found on a topic, students should document the different views, and not just take the first or most appealing answer. If there seem to be good reasons for finding one view more plausible, these should be included.
- Emphasize that the answer to an important question can be, “we don’t know,” in which case respect for truth requires accepting that, at least for now, that is the answer.

At the deadline, groups should submit outlines of the progress they have made, with a list of their sources. Check their sources for scientific and theological credibility and give feedback. Once students have received feedback, they are ready for the second part of the assignment. For homework, have them share their findings with their original adult conversation partner. At this time, they should have the adult fill out the response form in **Ask the Class Handout**.

As you debrief this activity, discuss with students whether they thought they used online resources responsibly. Have them assess the resources’ usefulness and limitations. Ask them to consider the importance of the sources they used, as well as to reflect on their own care in using them.

Optional Extras

If you can make time for students to give brief presentations in class based on what they have investigated, this will allow the adults’ questions to help shape the agenda for learning in the class. This could be communicated back to the adults. Another option would be to arrange an open evening for groups to give brief presentations on what they learned from their investigations and invite parents and/or adult guardians to attend.

DEBRIEF

Activity: Spread the Word

Time: Extended

In Brief

This activity allows students to review their learning about faith and science online from the previous activities in this Activity Map, and communicate it to a wider audience. Students will create group projects that exhibit their learning and bring these to the school community.

Goals

Students will communicate effectively to an audience outside the class on a topic related to faith, science, and the internet.

Thinking Ahead

Teaching FASTly includes recognizing that the connection between faith and science is complex. There are factors beyond discussions of truth claims, and these include the role of motivations, practices, and virtues.

This assignment revisits faith and science concepts and engages students in communication and collaboration inside and outside the classroom.

Group activities can seem frustrating to students who have learned that the main goal is to get tasks completed and get credit for them. The very human process of sharing our tasks, trying to get each team member to pull her or his weight, and negotiating different gifts and perspectives, can seem like a much less efficient way to get things done. However, both scientific work and healthy community frequently require collaboration, and draw upon the interpersonal virtues needed for collaboration to be successful.

You could use the **List of Virtues Handout** to connect the activity explicitly to Christian virtues, encouraging students to make connections between faith, virtue, and collaboration as a frame for the whole activity. Consider how this activity relates to your teaching practices the rest of the year—do your practices communicate that getting the task done is the main thing, or do you also focus on the quality of interaction between students?

Preparing the Activity

Resource needs will vary with students' individual projects.

Teaching the Activity

Have students form groups of two to four. Tell them that each group will be designing a presentation to communicate what they have learned to a wider audience in the school community. There are a variety of potential projects, which could include:

- A poster to be put up around the school, accompanied by an information booth during a lunch hour
- A chapel presentation
- An online presentation, such as a cluster of blog posts

- A presentation or learning resource for a group of younger students, for parents or other adults, or for a Sunday school group

The exact nature of the product can be left to the group to decide, but it should:

- Communicate to at least 10 other people who are not part of the class.
- Clearly present some topic that links faith, science, and the internet, based on what was learned from previous activities.
- Include some way of gathering feedback from some of those who read, view, or engage with the product.

Ask students to discuss carefully:

- What topic or piece of information could be both interesting and beneficial to other members of the community?
- What would be a creative and effective way of communicating that information?
- What kind of feedback would be helpful to get from those who see our presentation?
- Who will take which roles within the group, so that everything is prepared well for our audience?
- How will we hold one another accountable?

Allot time in class for students to have initial discussions, brainstorm ideas, and form a group plan. Then allow enough homework time for students to prepare materials. Have students give final form to their presentations in class, which will let you circulate to check for mistaken information in presentation materials. Require groups to offer their presentation to its intended audience, then set time aside in class for groups to report on the feedback they received. Have students submit this feedback along with their presentation materials.