

Only photosynthesis?

A true story

Some years ago, I was leading training at a Christian school and spent time with the science department. An experienced biology teacher spoke up. He assured me that he did not need to be persuaded that faith and education could be connected. He was already committed to applying his faith to his teaching with integrity. He paused. "The trouble is," he confessed, "most of the time I'm just explaining photosynthesis. Big faith-science questions come up every now and then, but mostly it's routine science, and faith does not seem very relevant."

- How would you respond to this teacher's concern?
- Discuss his story as a group and make a note below of any advice you would give him.
- Do this before reading the rest of the story on the second side of this sheet.

As my conversation with the biology teacher continued, we began to talk about other ways that faith and science might be related. It seemed as if he had been assuming that faith was only relevant to science class if a controversial topic were under discussion. But what other connections might there be? What about the character qualities needed to be a good scientist, a good colleague, and a good learner – how might they connect to faith? What about collaboration and community in the classroom and in the lab? What virtues are needed when we encounter people with different views, and how might we learn those virtues? What about ethical issues in science, or the impact of science and technology on society? What about scientists who are motivated by the desire to serve others, to pursue truth, and to love God with their minds? What about beauty, wonder, and gratitude – are there ways to cultivate these attributes while learning about science? Is Scripture relevant beyond Genesis 1? How could we show that we cared about student’s relationships with family and church when we teach about faith and science?

Perhaps, I suggested, the connection between faith and science is not like a single contested bridge across a chasm, but more like a tapestry with many threads. The biology teacher’s response stayed with me. He sat back in his chair. “I never thought about it like that,” he confessed.

- How many different connections between faith and science can you find in this second part of the story?
- How does this response compare to your own responses?
- How might science and Bible teachers work together to make these connections?

Teaching FASTly (FAST = **F**aith **A**nd **S**cience **T**eaching) means teaching in a way that allows both faith and science to remain in play in learning: each with its own integrity, neither canceling out the other, yet connected. It means looking out for *all* of the ways that faith and science can be in conversation, not just the few opportunities to take positions on controversial questions. Teaching FASTly means approaching students as whole people, with beliefs, commitments, character, feelings, and relationships, and not just as recipients of knowledge. The resources at www.teachfastly.com are not a replacement science curriculum, but an invitation to think about a way of teaching. They offer practical suggestions for teaching FASTly.