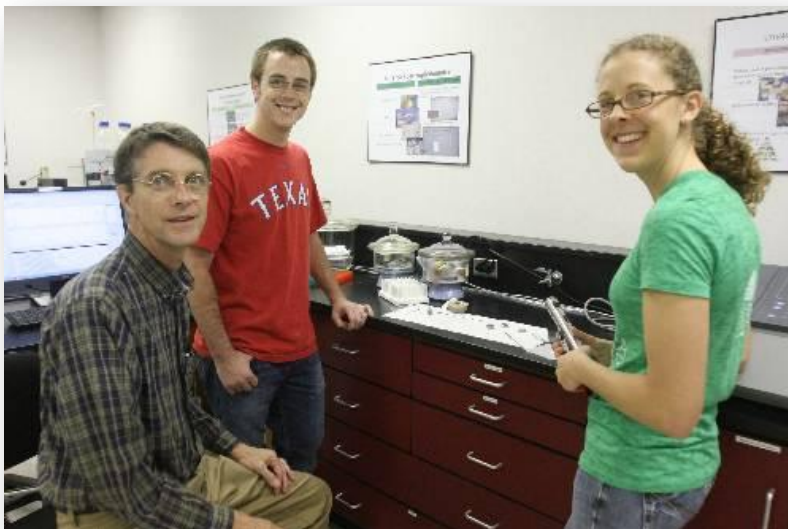


Don Spencer, Ph.D.

*Professor of Chemistry,
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Center For Excellence in
Christian Scholarship



Although a native Texan (Fort Worth, 1957), Dr. Spencer spent most of his childhood and adolescent years in Phoenix, Arizona. Dr. Spencer states that it is by God's grace that he was born into a Christian family where he was under the faithful preaching of the gospel of Christ from week to week, and at a young age, God graciously called him to faith in Christ. It is the piece of biography that he is most thankful for.

Dr. Spencer says that he knew going into college that he wanted to be a teacher, and that he liked chemistry better than other subjects. These two elements worked together to establish his course. Upon graduation, he moved to Denver, Colorado, in a general migration of a number of college friends, to be part of an inner city church plant. Spencer taught chemistry and math for six years in Christian and public schools and during that time, married his lovely wife, Michele, (whom he had met during college), and they began their family. The Spencers have six wonderful children (ages 16 to 28), one excellent son-in-law, and their first grandchild is on the way. Dr. Spencer left teaching to attend graduate school with the hope of eventually teaching at the college level. After obtaining his Ph.D. and a couple of post-doctoral research positions that eventually landed the Spencer family in Indiana, Dr. Spencer worked for ten years in medical diagnostics research and development. In 2004, Dr. Spencer was offered a position here at ETBU, and in his words, God mercifully allowed him to return to teaching.

What brought you to ETBU?

I believe it was God's timing, really, that brought me to ETBU from somewhat distant northern Indiana, where we lived at the time. I knew about ETBU because my uncle (Bruce Tankersley) taught here. At the particular time, our family was planning a trip to the area for my oldest son to visit LeTourneau University, so I decided to just take a peek at the ETBU website for faculty positions. It turned out, providentially, that a chemistry position had been posted that very week. While my son visited Le Tourneau, I visited ETBU, and God took care of the rest of the details. So it took nearly forty years, but I finally got back to Texas!

What makes a student successful in your class?

Regarding the question of what makes a student successful in my classes, I guess it is important first to define success. I suppose success can be gauged on a number of different levels, with GPA points on the transcript perhaps the most immediately enticing measure, but probably not the one that ultimately is most important -- and it doesn't always mean "getting an A", although that often is an attendant outcome. I think success in a class is best measured by what is happening inside students' minds as they evaluate and synthesize the content of the course material and make critical connections with other areas of knowledge and experience (that sounds very grand, doesn't it?). Or thinking about it in terms of the study habits of successful students, these are the ones who realize that academic success requires concentrated effort. These students are the ones who take serious responsibility for their own learning. Among other things, they are engaged in the classroom, they read the assignments, work the problems, and ask the questions. I'm sure we would all like to see a lot more student success of this type, and the challenge of course, is how I as a teacher am going to order my students' academic experiences in a way that will increase the likelihood of such success. It's not very difficult to define student success, but I wish I was better at seeing them actually pulling it off!

What do you enjoy about being a part of the ETBU community?

The first question of the Westminster Shorter Catechism is very brief, both in query and in response, but has amazingly rich implications. "Q: *What is the chief end of man?* A: *Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever.*" That really summarizes my hope for all of life, and it certainly speaks to my aspirations for teaching; that in some measure, God would be glorified in the classroom lessons, in the interactions with students, and in what the students take away from the course. And hopefully, that what I do, in some small measure, will contribute to the extension of Christ's kingdom of those who will glorify Him and enjoy Him forever. And there are so many of my godly students and colleagues who have openly lived their lives in such a way, that by their example I am encouraged to give glory and thanks to God, and to enjoy Him both now and forever. For me, that is one of the rich blessings of being part of the ETBU community of faith.

Academic Credentials

B.S. in Ed., Chemistry, Northern Arizona University, 1980
Ph.D., Chemistry, University of Denver, 1991

Areas of Expertise

Dr. Spencer's graduate training is in the area of biophysical chemistry (protein stability and dynamics). At ETBU, Spencer teaches Organic Chemistry, Biochemistry, Physical Chemistry, as well as freshman level chemistry and physical science courses.

Professional Affiliations

American Chemical Society (ACS)
American Scientific Affiliation (ASA)
Texas Association of Advisors for the Health Professions (TAAHP)