

Chronicles of Hope: Christian English Language Educators in Korea and Abroad

GREETINGS FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to the Fall 2020 Edition of Chronicles of Hope!

It is our second semester teaching under the tapestry of CoVid 19. We are all a little more experienced with the amount of material available online and probably have our own ways of dealing with classroom issues.

This issue takes a bit of a break from classroom issues and deals with the theme of gratitude. What attitudes of gratitude have blessed your classroom lately? Have you shared them? There are sound-bits in the first article, “On Gratitude”, on this topic. “The Problem Class” shares a story from a teacher from the United States that you do not want to miss. “On the Value of Empathy” shares a different story and it is by Michael Free, a teacher here in Korea.

There are two book review for this edition. “On Christian Teaching: Practicing Faith in the Classroom” reviews David I. Smith’s book of the same title. David I. Smith continues to think and publish in a way that we all need to be reminded of. “Breaking Bread with the Dead” talks about the latest offering from Alan Jacobs. This is about reading and thinking about what you have been reading deeply. We have all read authors that have offended us from time to time, but what would happen if we read to find out the author’s deepest intentions and put all the other thoughts aside?

This issue is meant to be a break from the usual. So, go grab coffee or tea and sit in the sunshine while you read!

Blessings,
Virginia Hanslien



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*A teacher affects eternity; he can
never tell where his influence
stops.*

-Henry Adams

ON GRATITUDE

I had the pleasure of talking to a few teachers about gratitude in their lives and in their classrooms. These stories represent ESL teachers in Korea. Read through these reflections and think about what you are grateful for.

Shi Yong Choi

I run a hogwon and have seen a significant decrease in the number of students. It's a hogwon (educational institution) for children. The parents of these children want them to take the classes with me. I am often at a loss to say something to students because I know it will go back to the parents.

Students rarely say thank you to me personally. They do come to class which is the "thank you."

Alison Bill

I teach the same students for all four years they are at university. The blessing is I get to see them develop over that time. I get to see the energetic high school students turn into young adults. I am especially thankful that I have the opportunity to touch their lives and to teach them English.

That is the reason for what I do. I get to see the change into more socially and emotionally mature adults.

Ji Myong Park

Right now, I am thankful for the students that come to my classes. I also work for a hogwon (educational institution). I know that many of them prefer to study in person, but that just isn't possible right now with CoVid 19. I know a number of students aren't taking any extra class right now, so I really appreciate the ones who are.

As well, I really appreciate the ones who are thoughtfully give good evaluations to myself and other teachers. This may seem like a small thing, but it's not. The students know that a poor evaluation may cause us to lose our position. I would love to say a big thank you to those students who consistently give high evaluations. It's a small gift given in a generous way.

James Rush

Although teaching online can have a frustrating learning curve with the number of students who still insist on leaving their video off, I am constantly surprised and reassured by the number of students who express, "Thank you, Professor" as the class ends.

One particular story I remember is a student who was quite frustrated about not being able to log into an LMS account and seemed to be afraid of losing points. Some students are not 'information technology literate'. After a few exchanges in a KakaoTalk chatroom, I began to see that the challenge was a combination of it being an unfamiliar technology along with the directions being in English. After some reassurance and a few direct messages, the young person expressed a sincere "Thank you very much!" towards me.

THE PROBLEM CLASS

Several years ago, along with several other faculty members, I helped develop a course to increase the chances of students success in university. Beyond the traditional study tips, orientation, reading, writing, study and test-taking skills the class was also designed to foster personal growth on many levels. An additional objective of the course was to build a sense of community within the class, as we're a community with no dorms, fraternities, sororities, basketball teams or other organized sports.

To varying degrees, the class achieved its objectives. Studies that we conducted shows that students who completed the course tended to stay in school and do better in their classes. I had taught the class for several semesters and deeply enjoyed each experience. I learned as much as the students about human nature and how to solve problems.

Then came the class from hell. It started out badly—most of the students didn't want to be there; they couldn't see the need or purpose of the class and felt it was a waste of time. Factions developed. They argued with one another. They constantly put each other down. In groups of two or three, students banded together and formed mini-cliques. They were reluctant to work together on many of the group projects that were required for the course. It was a teacher's nightmare come true.

After about four or five weeks, I couldn't stand it any longer. Something had to be done. In fifteen years of teaching (at that time), I had never had a class like this, and I wasn't sure what to do.

Following much reflection I decided that the real problem was they didn't see each other as equal human beings. They couldn't or wouldn't relate to one another.

My solution was simple.

I had given every student a pack of three by five index cards at the beginning of the semester to take notes on (or whatever they chose to do with them). I asked them to take out one card.

"Don't put your name on the card," I instructed. "You have ten minutes in which to complete this assignment," I continued. "On the card you have, I want each of you to tell me this: If there were one thing in your life you could change, what would it be?"

With surprisingly little grumbling, the students began. After the allotted time, I collected the card. I then shuffled them and passed the cards back to the class, each student getting someone else's card.

I considered myself a part of the class, and during every assignment the class was given, I participated as they would. This being so, I had a card of my own and, in turn, had a student's card.

I then randomly selected students to read the card they held. The first student read from her card. "I wish my fourteen year old daughter was not deaf." The one deaf girl in the class (no one besides me knew she was deaf) turned so she could read the other students' lips and had a look of understanding on her face.

The next student read: "I wish that my husband's back was better so he could work. We have no money, and our car is going to repossessed next week. I don't know how I'll get to school if that happens."

(Continued next page)

There is no more noble profession than teaching. A great teacher is a great artist, but his medium is not canvas, but the human soul.

-Anonymous

Experience is the name that everyone gives to his mistakes.

-Oscar Wilde

Teaching kids to count is fine, but them what counts is best.

-Bob Talent

THE PROBLEM CLASS—DONALD ARNEY

*A master can tell you what he
expects from you. A teacher,
though, awakens your own expect-
tations.*

- Patricia Neal

*That I may care enough to share
enough to let others become what
they can be.*

-John O' Brien

*One of the beauties of teaching is
that there is no limit to one's
growth as a teacher, just as there
is no knowing beforehand how
much your students can learn.*

-Herbert Kohl

"I wish that my mother did not have breast cancer," read another . And so on. And so on.

I stopped after seven or eight students had read their cards. There were tears streaming down their faces of nearly everyone in class ... from what had been read to them and from what they were holding.

Without my having to say so, they had realized that they had far more in common than they had thought. Each of them had problems in their lives. Some small compared to others. They could share that. They could relate.

From that point on, the class changed. They worked together. They formed study groups for other classes. They found friends.

Most of those students came back for their second semester of university. They had another reason to go besides their education—their friends were there!

But that is not the end of the story! After the end of the class session, I collected those index cards and took them to my office where I read them all. One stood out among all others. It was one that had not been read in class. It was the one that had brought tears to my eyes.

Andrew had muscular dystrophy. Most people with Andrew's form of muscular dystrophy barely make it to their teens. Andrew was twenty. He came to call every day without fail. He participated in everything. He had to work physically hard to do his assignments, and he did them very well. He was one of the few in class who never complained or joined in the sniping. He came in his motorized wheelchair along with Ren, a gold retriever who was his helper dog.

Given his physical condition, Andrew's writing was unmistakable. I read his card and was humbled and moved. His reply to the question of "what would you like to change in your life" was this, "I would be more understanding of people, and would like to be a better person."

Andrew died a couple of years afterward from pneumonia, a complication that arose from his MD.

I'll never forget what he wanted to change in his life. It's now the same thing I'd change in mine.

Donald Arney was Professor and Division Chair at Ivy Tech State College in Indiana. He has degrees in electronics and computer integrated manufacturing. He is not the famous Canadian inventor from Canada. This piece was taken from *Chicken Soup for the Teachers' Soul*.

ON THE VALUE OF EMPATHY - MICHAEL FREE

This piece has been republished with permission from KOTESOL Voices October 2020.

COVID-19 has taught us teachers a lot of lessons, hasn't it? We've learned about technology, moving from questions like, "What's Zoom?" through "Did I forget to unmute myself *again*?" to "How can I rename my breakout rooms so that students have a choice as to whether to work quietly, share ideas, or ask me questions?" We've learned about adaptability in the midst of a situation that was (and is) complex, dynamic, and (possibly) never-ending, moving from "When are they going to tell us if we're online or F2F?" through "But are we going to be online for the whole semester?" to "How can I better prepare/adapt my materials for either online or offline?" Many of us dropped the "how" from that last question, and eventually ended up asking ourselves, somewhat despondently, "Can I even do this?" The answer to that last question, for most, was yes, in case you're wondering. In the next few lines, I'd like to share some thoughts that I had as I reflected after last semester ended. It's about empathy, and more specifically the value of empathy.

I'm going to forego defining the term, beyond noting that it often overlaps with sympathy. If you're reading this, you're most likely a language teacher and don't need me to whip out my Merriam-Webster. Believe me, I understand and share your feelings about people who define terms when they don't need to. [Insert wink emoticon here.]

If you know me only in passing, it might seem strange that I would have thought about empathy at all, let alone found it to be one of the most important lessons from last semester. After all, I'm a fan of vulgar humor (thanks largely to Frankie Boyle), a lover of extreme horror movies (France's *Martyrs* and South Korea's *I Saw the Devil* are among my favorites), and you're more likely to find me at a pub than working on my mindfulness. But to quote President Beck (Morgan Freeman's character in *Deep Impact*), "It just seems that way." In fact, I'm coming to believe that it is our empathy and the value we place on it that connects us to each other as members of the teaching profession, as well as being one of the most important qualities we can offer our students—and indeed, ourselves.

I first realized the importance of empathy when I was near the beginning of my teaching career. It was "that time of the semester," when I found I had a modest line of students waiting outside my office. (Yes, that's how long I've been teaching, since the days when teachers had office hours and students showed up for them in person.) Near the back of said line was a student who was obviously upset. As in, I don't know if she would have been able to stay in the line and wait her turn. So I motioned for her to come with me and politely made an excuse to the first person in line. Turns out she was upset and had a very good reason to be (no, I'm not sharing it). She didn't know who to talk to but knew she had to talk to someone. We didn't speak for long, but I gave her the best advice I could, pointed her in the direction of student mental health services (which she'd never heard of), told her to email her other professors and then to go home (*home* home, not campus home). She was rather shocked that I suggested she go home, but left, she said, feeling as though I had listened to her, provided some options, and was in her corner. Myself, I did not feel as though I had done anything particularly remarkable, but was happy that I had been able to help, even if only somewhat.

The above is what is called, apparently, *compassionate empathy*: "feeling someone's pain, and taking action to help." (I know because I just googled it.) If you're interested, you can compare this with a few other types of empathy: cognitive, emotional, spiritual, and even somatic. I think this is a very common trait amongst career teachers.

More recently (we're now in the present century), I had a student appear at my door at the end-of-semester "grade challenge" period. He had been absent for a significant part of the term but had explained his situation, and we had worked out a plan so he could complete the coursework. I thought he was going to complain about his grade, which had taken something of a hit due to the absences. Instead, he said he wanted to thank me for caring so much and helping him. I was baffled: what had I done that motivated him to come to campus to see me? Surely his other professors had made similar arrangements. Yes, he said, but I had listened and understood his situation without judging him. Perhaps this is what John Medina had in mind

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Michael Free



ON THE VALUE OF EMPATHY—MICHAEL FREE

Empathy is seeing with the eyes of another, listening with the ears of another and feeling with the heart of another.

– Alfred Adler

If you can learn a simple trick, Scout, you'll get along a lot better with all kinds of folks. You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view, until you climb inside of his skin and walk around in it.

- Atticus Finch in *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1962)

The purpose of human life is to serve, and to show compassion and the will to help others.

– Albert Schweitzer

when he wrote, “Empathy works so well because it does not require a solution. It requires only understanding.”

I found it amazing that something I did quite naturally, as a matter of course, could have so much value to a student. These things we do, the many “understandings” that we have about our students in regular semesters, that we hardly notice, can have such a positive impact on our students’ lives. It feels like, at least in my case, my empathy is sort of hidden. I wondered if there were other students I had affected in a similar way who never mentioned anything (or, on the other side of the coin, students I had failed in some way because I didn’t understand or wasn’t listening).

Last semester, of course, was anything but regular. It was, for a good while, pure pandemonium. Students were confused and stressed. The administration was confused and stressed. Teachers were—well, you know! My overall response was to keep things as simple as possible, be as flexible as possible, and to make absolutely sure that my students knew that I understood they were under enormous amounts of stress. Moreover, that regular rules about deadlines and attendance were, while not forgotten, somewhat more...flexible. I tried to give them the benefit of the doubt wherever I could. This was not always easy, because I was quite stressed out a lot of the time. But I was committed to the idea of being as empathetic as I could, because I saw the immense value of it. Because at the *most important moments*, that’s just what our students might need, or what our colleagues need, or what we need. And these days there are a lot of those moments—and it doesn’t just seem that way.

served as president of the Gangwon Chapter of KOTESOL. His professional interests include pronunciation, English as a lingua franca, and humanist education.

About the Author

Michael Free is from Canada (Toronto and Montréal). He holds two master's degrees: in TEFL (University of Birmingham) and in arts (McMaster University). Michael has worked in Korea for more than twelve years, primarily within the public school system, and always in the beautiful, spacious province of Gangwon. He is presently at Kangwon National University in Chuncheon. He is very active in professional development, organizing and presenting at conferences large and small, and doing teacher-training sessions whenever feasible. Michael was the co-chair of the 2019 KOTESOL International Conference, chair of the 2016 National Conference in Wonju, and has

YOURS ARE THE HANDS...

Yours are the hands that brushed my hair from my eyes. I was so young. You reassured me, helped me, made me feel that being away from Mom was not so bad after all. Kindergarten was okay because you made it okay.

Yours are the hands that clapped. You clapped to get my attention in first grade. You let me know that there was both time to play and time to work in an all-day school.

In first grade, you taught me discipline, fairness, and patience. I was starting to understand in my creative and inventive way.

Yours are the hands that showed me how to wrap a May Pole in second grade. I also learned how to make a tissue paper corsage that made mom cry tears of great joy. She still keeps that corsage.

Yours are the hands that introduced me to geography in third grade. You shared stories of travel and adventure. You gave me the desire to learn more about other people and other lands. You made my word bigger.

Yours are the hands that made numbers come alive in fourth grade. You shared a passion for math. I could see that math is used in every part of lives. You challenged my thinking.

Yours are the hands that showed me technology was a fast train that I should be on in fifth grade. You taught me that computers were user-friendly. You even showed me that my future was indeed going to hold this need.

Throughout all the years of education, yours are the hands that helped mine. You were with me in times of trouble. You wiped away tears when I thought the world was against me. You clapped the loudest when I won the Good Citizen of the Month award. You shook your finger to scold me when I throwing dirt on the playground. You directed and waved me on the music presentation in school plays. You handed me a "Happy Birthday" ribbon on my special day.

You raised a finger to your lips ever so quietly to remind me that the library was a quiet place.

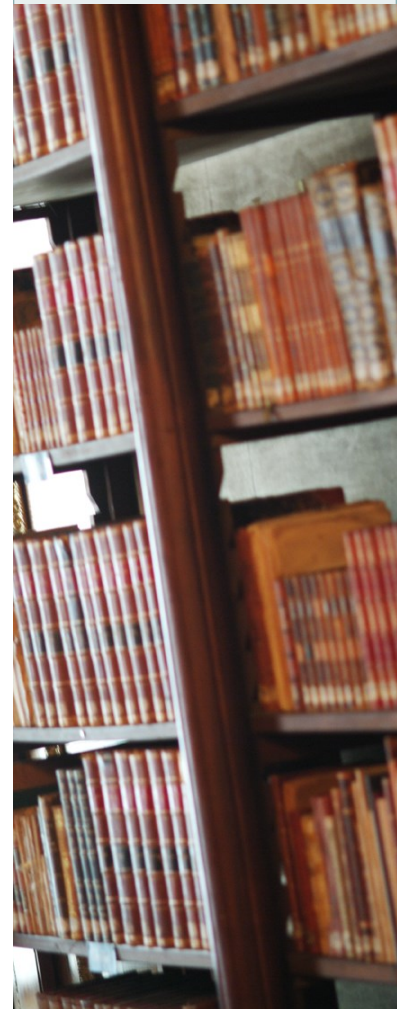
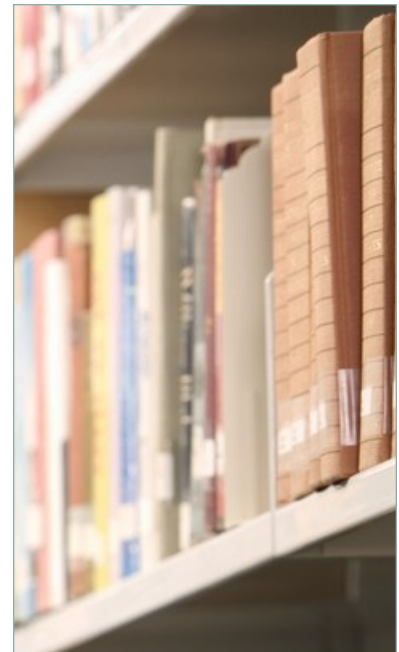
Yours are the hands that shake mine, wish me luck, and point me onward and upward to the level of my education.

Thank you.

Thank you for helping me mold my future and care as you did all those years.

Yours are the hands that will touch my life forever.

Anonymous





Virginia Hanslien

ON CHRISTIAN TEACHING: PRACTICING FAITH IN THE CLASSROOM (BOOK REVIEW)

It takes quite a bit of time to realize that learning about another method is not going to help you teach in a better way. This may be a natural for those of us who want to focus on the concrete and practical but it does have its limits.

David I. Smith's book *On Christian Teaching: Practicing Faith in the Classroom* suggests that we all need a "place for pedagogy", a concept that began years ago.

"Before more centrally organized colleges won the day in the fifteenth century, the basic options for students coming to study at the university were to rent private accommodations or to become a part of a communal student house. Such a house was both a part of the university structure and distinct place of learning. A masters of the arts would oversee it and provide academic teaching while also being responsible for food, furniture, and the shared rules and routines of the community in exchange for a weekly fee" (p. 11).

These communal houses were referred to as *paedagogium*, which means "a place of pedagogy." This is a place where teachers and students dwell together.

Chapters 2-3 give us the first nine minutes of a first session of a college German course taught by the author. He unpacks these nine minutes in terms of language acquisition, classroom management, reflection, participation, learning identity, motivation, classroom atmosphere, and the future learning of the class. From here, chapter 3 goes into the ecosystem of teaching and how faith informs the approach we take.

Chapters 4-5 speaks of the dissatisfaction some of us feel with the existing patterns of teaching. Our faith is to address a moral order and shared imagination about how things should be as opposed to what what actually is.

He is referring to the fact that curriculum is often framed within economic competition, a consumer self, and a focus on the pragmatic, in addition to being intertwined with the themes of love and God and neighbor.

From here, he explains four priorities. First, we are to see students as humans that are made in God's image. Second, he wants us to tell stories. Third, our actions are to show the moral importance and significance of language and learning. Fourth, we are to be attentive to both the student and the context.

Chapter 6 introduces a three-step framework and chapters 7 to 9 flesh this framework out. We are to be intentional and biblical with our teaching and our faith.

Chapter 7 begins this first step of seeing things in a new way. We are to engage the imagination with storytelling. We are to bear witness in words and actions to how things should be, not as they are.

Chapter 8 is all about promoting student involvement in learning.

Chapter 9 explains the third part of the framework, "reshaping practice." This is about classroom space, time, teacher language, and material resources.

Chapter 10 asks a great question that we all need to think about. Can teaching practices be distinctly Christian? Of course, the answer depends on the story we want to express to students.

"The goal is not to find some technique that Christians can copyright. The goal is to shape a set of practices that are as consistent as we can manage with the story of all things made new as the kingdoms of this world become the kingdom of our God and our Christ" (p. 130).

The final chapter explains where Christian scholarship is on teaching. Smith is very aware that pedagogy is rarely addressed and discusses why that is. This brings the book full circle, establishing a gap in the literature.

What this does do is remind all teachers that their classroom choices have eternal impact. We all need that reminder.

This book would be great for both the student teacher and for the teacher who has been teaching for a while. It helps that each chapter finishes with a handful of question "For Reflection and Discussion" and a "Journal" writing prompt. If your goal is think deeply about how to teach in a both a Christian and a highly effective way, I would recommend this book.

Virginia Hanslien is the editor and occasional article writer for this newsletter and the corresponding educational blog, Chroniclesofhopekorea.wordpress.com.

BREAKING BREAD WITH THE DEAD (BOOK REVIEW)

All English language students should be engaged in reading in order to bring up their skills, learn new vocabulary, and engage with new and old ideas. This book review offers perspective on why students should be reading old books with different ideas.

Cherie Harder: Dr. Alan Jacobs seeks to show his readers that engaging with the often provocative, strange, even unsettling writings of the past offers us not only the possibility of broadening our outlook or deepening our understanding, but also growing and thickening our reserves of resilience, imagination, and empathy, what he refers to as our ‘personal density’. At a time when virtually all of us must fend off an hourly onslaught of superfluous information and navigate a social media landscape shaped by algorithms that steal attention and withhold context, as well as populated by legions of clueless yet cruel trolls, it’s tempting and understandable to seek tranquility or at least relief by retreating to the familiar. Welcome Alan.

Alan Jacobs: Thank you so much. It’s great to be here!

Cherie Harder: It’s really good to have you. So, of the many books you have written, I’m betting this is the first time you’ve written what you called a ‘self-help book’. And you make the interesting argument that engaging with old books, even with their often unjust, racist, or otherwise retrograde assumptions or arguments instead of being triggering, actually helps one stay tranquil in the here and now. So why would old books promote serenity?

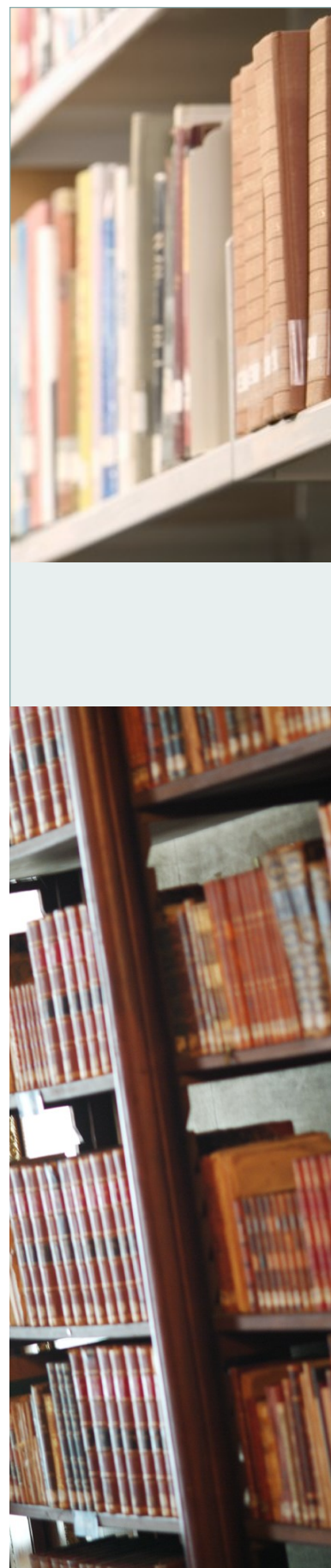
Alan Jacobs: Thanks for the introduction which I think shows you get exactly what I’m trying to do in the book, and thanks for this question. I think that first of all, I do want to say that I really am kind of serious when I call it a self-help book. There are many, many different reasons why one might study the past, thousands. But I really am focusing on why it might help what I call our ‘personal density’ to increase our temporal bandwidth. And the idea—we can talk about those terms maybe a little later on—but the idea goes something like this: When you are engaged with the works of the past, you are dealing with difference. You are dealing with people whose whole world is different than yours, people with different experiences, with

a different outlook, with different ideas. You’re doing so in an environment that you control. We all know how difficult it can be to try to maintain our patience. We certainly don’t have any shot at serenity. We’re just trying to maintain our patience when we’re dealing with people who we strongly disagree with. But when it’s the voices from the past, and we are visiting their world, and we assume the posture of visitors, of guests, then we can, I think, get a little bit of distance on our emotions. They’re not going to talk back to us. They’re not going to fight back. They’re not going to do anything that will hurt us. If the encounter ends up being a little too intense for us, well, we can just close the book, and go away, and then come back to it later on when we’ve calmed down a little bit. It is training in encountering difference, but in a way that we have enough control over it, that it doesn’t have to agitate us and frustrate us. But maybe if we do that for a while, we can get a little better at dealing with our immediate neighbors as well.

Cherie Harder: Well, let’s talk a little bit about those terms and what you mean by personal density and how it is either formed or thickened.

Alan Jacobs: Yeah, so that phrase comes from the American novelist Thomas Pynchon. And it’s in one of his novels called *Gravity’s Rainbow*, which is an extraordinarily difficult novel. There’s a character in *Gravity’s Rainbow*. He’s a German engineer named Kurt Mondaugen, and he talks like a German engineer. At one point, he coins what he calls ‘Mondaugen’s Law’. And one of the conceits of *Gravity’s Rainbow* is that everybody knows it, it’s totally famous, even though, of course, Thomas Pynchon is just making it up. Mondaugen’s Law goes like this: Personal density is proportionate to temporal bandwidth. What he means is that if you have

greater temporal bandwidth, what he calls the width of your now, he says then what that does when your approach to your everyday life reaches into the past and imaginatively reaches into the future. Then that increases your personal density, and I think maybe one of the best ways to understand what he means by personal density is to think about what the Apostle Paul says when he warns Christians against being blown about by every wind of doctrine. And I think if you’re on social media all the time, if you are



THE CHRISTIAN TEACHERS SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP (CT-SIG) PURPOSE STATEMENT:

The purpose of this group is to inspire Christian teachers to seek excellence in their teaching, integrity in their lifestyle, and service to others by doing the following:

- providing role models who integrate their faith with their profession.
- sharing resources for teaching and personal growth
- encouraging one another through fellowship and worship



For more information about the Christian Teachers SIG or this newsletter contact...

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BREAKING BREAD WITH THE DEAD (BOOK REVIEW)

then the winds of doctrine, as it were, the winds that of public opinion, are blowing really, really hard. If that's where you spend your whole life, you don't have the personal density to resist that. The harder those winds of public opinion blow, then the farther you are going to be carried away by them. When Mondaugen says, when this character says, personal density is proportionate to temporal bandwidth, he's saying that the more you understand about the past, the more you understand about human experience— And by the way, this was equally true of space. Understanding other cultures is extremely valuable even when they are in our own time. But because we have a kind of a global culture now, getting into the past is the way to get really, really alien experiences. And that gives us some perspective on our own moment, and when we have that perspective on our own moment, then we are able to

judge things from a more secure and stable position. We have the personal density that allows us to do that, and we're not just simply being blown about by every wind of doctrine. That's the core idea.

The entirety of this interview can be read at <https://www.ttf.org/portfolios/online-conversation-oct-2-alan-jacobs/>



Christian English Language Educators Association

We are happy to announce that the 2021 conference will be held virtually! With the barrier of travel eliminated, we hope to have wider participation from people all around the globe. The CELT Virtual Conference will take place on March 5-6, 2021, from 1:00-5:00 pm (PT).

The theme of the conference is Imago Dei: Celebrating the Beauty and Benefits of Diversity. Every human being has been created in the image of God, wonderfully created to think rationally, to create, and to fulfill personal potential. At the same time, each human being on earth is beautifully unique, contributing to the world in a way no one else can. This year at the CELT Virtual Conference, let's reflect on how diversity, in all its facets, including culture, perspectives, geographic locations, ages, identities, and language teaching contexts, all contribute to bring us so much beauty and so many benefits.

Presentation proposals must be informed by a Christian perspective. This means that you can present your secular TESOL presentation when it is accompanied by your Biblical worldview. Presentations may highlight theory, research, or practice, and may focus on educational, linguistic, cultural, practical, or spiritual issues related to English language teachers.

Please go to <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeHkb3ow4w9cvXKqECOEabWydnmgzTw-jWUTEfhAq3FYJ3gQ/viewform> for more information.