

BCL ep345 Why Latin in a Google Translate World with Chad Kim

Classical schools are unique in their insistence that children should learn Latin, but in a world where AI can convert instantly a text or conversation into literally any language, why should our children spend time prioritizing the learning of an ancient language, and wouldn't it be more practical to learn something that's a modern language? It's just one of the many questions we often hear as classical schools, and it's definitely not just because we're nostalgic and we love holding onto the past. The answers are both practical and complement the deepest vision of our school to form the next generation, to love and to know what is true, good, and beautiful. Stay tuned for this episode of Basecamp Live.

Mountains, we all face them as we seek to influence the next generation. Get equipped to conquer the challenges, summit the peak, and shape exceptionally thoughtful, compassionate, and flourishing human beings. We call it ancient future education for raising the next generation.

Welcome to Basecamp Live. Now your host, Davies Owens. Welcome to another episode of Basecamp Live.

Thanks for joining us this week. We are here every week, and we are all about forming habits, so join us each week as we put up a new episode spanning a variety of topics. We get to jump on a fairly common question about why Latin here in this episode, but before we do, a quick shout out and thank you to the many schools that are partnering here with Basecamp Live.

By the way, I put together some promo kits if you are at a school and you'd love some of our flyers and resources to put in the front office just to help tell folks about the opportunity to join us on the podcast. We certainly appreciate that, and any mentioning or linking to the podcast just helps get people more familiar. Lots of resources over the last eight years on the Basecamp Live website.

Also, there is an opportunity there to learn more about ways to connect even your RSS feed on your website. That's a technical thing to be able to connect each website as it automatically updates to the school website. And then finally, I just mentioned on the website there's a button there under speaking.

I have had the joy of being on the campuses of many schools just in the last few months and look forward to being at more in the future if you're interested in having an opportunity for me to come out and speak to parents and teachers and even students. Love to be a part of that as well. All of that is at BasecampLive.com. And more than ever, I just love hearing from you.

Info at BasecampLive.com to shoot me a quick email. In this episode, I just wanna do a special shout out to a couple special friends at schools around the country. Del Cook, head of school at Sandhills Classical Christian School there in Whispering Pines, North Carolina.

And Patsy Hinton, head of school at Covenant Classical Christian School in Columbia, South Carolina. So big shout out to all the Carolinas, to the many parents and educators that are raising the next generation with classical Christian education. We sure appreciate you and your partnership with Zipcast and Basecamp Live.

On this episode, I wanna say a special shout out and thank you to our sponsors for this episode, Wilson Hill Academy, Life Architects Coaching, and our partners at the Herzog Foundation. I have the joy in this episode of sitting down with an old friend, Chad Kim. I got to know Chad years ago when he was at the Ambrose School.

He is now the Assistant Professor of Theology and Classical Languages at St. Louis University. He loves to spend time riding bikes and playing sports with his family while reading many of the great works of classical literature and teaching others to do the same. He's the host of a History of Christian Theology podcast and author of Ecclesiastical Latin, a primer on language of the church and the way of humility, as well as St. Augustine's Theology of Preaching.

I know you'll enjoy this conversation without further ado. Here is my interview with Chad Kim. Well, Chad, welcome to Basecamp Live.

Thank you. It's good to be with you. For folks that don't know, we have had a bit of history together.

Back in my early days at the Ambrose School in Boise, I'd been there about a year or two, and you came along and jumped in as a young teacher and began a journey teaching many things, but in particular languages. So yeah, give folks a little bit of your background. Yeah, well, thank you for having me, and it was fun to get to know Davies about the same time, I think.

I arrived in 2011, so I spent a few years at Ambrose teaching French, Latin, and Greek. Yeah, it is a long road to get there, so I was, I don't know, in my late 20s. I was fortunate to go to a high school.

Although we didn't call it classical, I started Latin in eighth grade, and I think Davies mentioned my, I did actually dedicate my book to Florence Lewis, who was the lady who taught me Latin. She knew Latin and French, and then she was a lovely lady who passed away a few years ago. Before she died, my parents were able to, I wasn't here, but my parents were able to tell her and her husband that Chad Kim, who they had in eighth and ninth grade, and 10th grade, I guess, had gone on to become a Latin teacher, so she was very happy.

You gotta know you've done a really good job when an eighth grade boy goes on to become a Latin teacher. That's wonderful that you can point back to her influence. So often teachers, of course, as you know as a teacher, don't get to hear and see the fruit of all their hard labor, so it's great that she was encouraged by your great work.

Yeah, but it is a winding path, so I did Latin for a while, then I wasn't sure what I wanted to do, we did some French, lived in France, and sort of really learned what it meant to learn a

language as a spoken language, so I learned in kind of a typical way of Latin a lot of tables, and a mo-a-ma-sa-ma-a-ma-ma-sa-ma-ta-sa-mant, and, but yeah, so I was able to kind of think through what does it mean to really acquire a language, to speak a language, and use a language, and so that was beneficial, and then I went and did my MDiv in New Jersey, and then moved out to start teaching, and I had to think, okay, well, how am I gonna convey this to students, and what does that look like in the classroom, and so you, actually, it was Ambrose that sent me on a journey to Italy, where I met people who spoke Latin, and I was pretty sure that they were making it up, when they said on the website, you can come speak Latin with us, I was like, I've studied Latin, you don't speak it. That's not a thing, I was sure. Maybe pig Latin, but not really, yeah, exactly.

That's right, my mom loves some pig Latin, she loves that joke, yeah. That's about as far as I got, no, I mean, it is, I remember while you were going over there, and I thought, there's a place on Earth where people walk around, I'm sure they're wearing, like, robes and sandals, but I mean, what are they doing speaking Latin all the time, and why would that be necessary, which kind of leads us to the, really, the questions I wanna walk through, in really this kind of overarching question, in this modern moment, where I still am in awe of Google Translate, you can travel around the world, and you just speak in your phone, and it translates it to the person standing there with you in another language, and I think just, we're very pragmatic people today, and a lot of folks listening have put their children in a classical Christian school, and they love all the things about it, but the whole language thing is perplexing, I think, to a lot of people. It just seems so odd and impractical, and maybe even unnecessary, and yet, there's a lot there, and it's not just, I loved in your opening to the curriculum, this new Latin curriculum that you've written, which we'll talk about, is that you call it an idiosyncratic work, and I was like, I gotta, and I looked it up, because that's a great word, and it means a temperamental peculiarity, and I thought, that's just a perfect word you picked, Chad, because I think a lot of people listening are thinking, this Chad guy has got a temperamental peculiarity, where, and you probably do, in a good way, that you have a natural interest in these languages that are, quote, dead languages, or not actively being used, except in rare places in Italy, so help us walk through, I mean, just, you know, you start looking at typical lists of why people explain Latin, in particular, is useful.

It's a bedrock of classical education in schools, and people say things like, well, it's a foundation of Western civilization. I mean, how do you react to that? Are these good answers? I wanna walk you through these answers and get your reaction to them. What do you think? Is that an accurate description? Well, it absolutely is.

You know, kind of the crazy thing, if you learn to read Latin, you can read, we could say about 2,500, 2,600 years worth of literature, and basically, the language, after it morphs into Italian, the language basically stays the same. I mean, people stopped speaking it about 1,000 AD as a mother tongue, so mothers were not speaking it to children, but it persists throughout the next 1,000 years, and there are still people who can speak it. They're not, you know, and read it, and so then, so the beauty of learning the language, and as a bedrock of Western civilization, is that

you can read thousands of years of stuff that was written in Italy, in America, and then stuff in, you know, people have travel journals all over the world, and they write in Latin.

It was the most accessible language, so, you know, it is the language that most people knew of the Bible, and medieval history, and that sort of thing. And I, you know, and having personally studied, I did study Latin way back in middle school days, and I've studied Hebrew and Greek in seminary, and I think there's certainly a lot of things we forget as only English speakers, that you lose a lot in a translation, words you can't just equally replicate in English language. So I assume then, again, that it's foundational to our politics, and our philosophy, and a lot of our literature, but it's also, there's a lot you lose if you don't know how to go back to the source.

Is that fair? Yeah, yeah, that's right. There can be a richness, you know, layers of meaning, and I think, in some ways, the so-called dead languages, they have a sort of a verve, a sort of vigor, that sometimes I feel like is lacking in English, in part because it seems like everything is connected a little better. And so, you know, you can think of Greek, the word for wind, and spirit, and breath are all one, and that provides a kind of a rich way to think about how the spirit moves, or, you know, these sorts of things.

So, if you know Owen Barfield, he uses this, he was a kind of, part of the reason that C.S. Lewis became a Christian, and this is one thing that he talks about, the sort of the poetic quality of language, especially Greek and Latin. Which ties into kind of this next value preposition of sort of the intellectual discipline and critical thinking that it helps you derive, and I think that, you know, talk about that, because, you know, I've heard people say, you actually are learning how to be a logically thinking person taking Latin, which just, how does that work? Because it seems like logic is a different class, you know, later in the afternoon, but right now we're doing Latin. How does it teach you to think critically? Yeah, well, I think, so, with this one, it can do that.

It doesn't, you know, as any language, I mean, as the average Roman learned Latin, they just picked it up as German speakers learn German, or Polish speakers speak Polish. So, you know, I think for them, you know, maybe it's less of a logical or intellectual exercise, but what, you know, when people who speak, you know, you and I speak English, and when we go to learn Latin, we have to think through, okay, what is a verb? What is a noun? Why are they different? And so you start being able to put those categories to use in another way, and so then you reflect back on your own language, and you begin to think logically about your own language. You know, whom is not just the fancier form of who.

Although that's what it sounds like, you know, well, whomever wrote this, you know, or whatever. It sounds fancy, but there's actually, you know, there's a logical grammatical reason for why you'd say whom or who. Well, and it seems like embedded in, I mean, there's logic in the sense of, you know, formal thinking logic, but, you know, again, stepping back, what is the purpose of education? What are we, what's the ultimate goal of what we do in classical Christian schools is very much the formation of our habits and our affections and things like the ability to attend well.

So tied into this, it seems like, is just the fact that a student has to slow down, to think carefully, to analyze language structure. I mean, these are tedious and slow coming things. It's not just Google Translate just whipped out the answer.

You had to really, you know, to your conjugation a moment ago, you're having to really learn how to parse these things into little details. I mean, it's almost like learning to play chess in some ways, right? Is that a fair analysis? Yeah, well, and that's right. I mean, and one philosopher I like says that love is attention.

And part of loving something is paying attention to it. And I think in an age of distraction, you know, we don't, we have to learn how to love by paying attention. And so sometimes, you know, languages can be frustrating.

I mean, I didn't always love Latin. My brother certainly hated it. I don't know if he'll listen, but he had to take Latin and he was not happy about it.

But it does help you pay attention. And that's a really hard thing in a modern age of distraction. So I'd also say that, I mean, it's just something as simple as that.

But yeah, then when you go to use your own language, you've thought through it a little bit more. And you can figure out when, you know, how to maybe even use your own language more effectively, even if you're not gonna, you know, we're not all gonna become Cicero or Augustine. Right, and not that every, you know, our modern moment is we all want answers that have to be incredibly practical and utilitarian.

Anything else seems to be a waste of time. I mean, that's just how we modern people tend to think. But, and there are reasons that are not quite that practical and they can be a little bit more, you know, generating deeper thought, which is a high value.

But to stay on this idea of just kind of helping us know, kind of a third point before we go to a break is just the idea that the truth is 50% of English words are derived from Latin. So, you know, this is, you know, to me the most pragmatic when people are like, well, how, what does that matter? Well, walk us through that. How does that work? I mean, we know that if we've learned Latin, all of a sudden we can probably decode English words better when we're reading or have a more prolific vocabulary.

So what are your thoughts? Yeah, well that, I think that's true. I used, we talked about idiosyncratic earlier. So that's Greek.

So we do have some Greek and English, but yeah, predominantly we're Latin. Although weirdly when you think about language, and especially English, English is, unlike most languages I've studied, it's sort of a vacuum or something. It just sucks up words from wherever it goes.

And so it's a Germanic language by grammar and syntax. It's a French, so the Latin that we have in English comes through French because of the Norman conquest of England. So, you

know, basically the educated elite in England spoke French.

And so that's where most of our Latinate vocabulary comes from. So English has, you know, has some, primarily, as you say, I've heard 60%, 50% of our words come from Latin through French. And then the rest are German, and then a little bit of Greek, and then, you know, kimono and other things from Japan or other wherever else.

So you do improve your vocabulary by knowing it. And so that will help you to read a lot of the great works of the Western tradition. And in a lot of cases, Dostoevsky or Tolstoy, they'll cite things in Latin or French or other things.

So sometimes, you know, even in books that are coming from all over the place, they'll still cite stuff in Latin, so. One is, I know I've been in a lot of upper school classrooms when they're reading more complex literature and people get stuck on a word. And I've, you know, the teachers say, okay, stop everybody.

What do you think this is in Latin? All of a sudden, wow, we just figured it out. It's pretty impressive because they have that toolkit right there with them. That's right.

Gained in their middle school Latin years. So it's good stuff. Why don't we take a quick break? We're gonna come back, keep working through these good reasons for studying Latin.

And I wanna hear more too, just about some really important work you're doing behind the scenes as an educator to create even better curriculum. So there's a lot happening in Latin world. We'll be right back with Dr. Chad Kim.

During this short break, I have a special invitation to all school leaders, administrators, and teachers. I want you to imagine for a moment stepping away from your everyday routine at school and diving deep into the rich foundations of Christian education, surrounded by world-class scholars, seasoned classroom teachers, and administrative experts with years of experience running schools with a lot of wisdom to share. That's exactly what the Herzog Foundation's Institute is offering.

I've had the joy of serving as a training coach for the last few years, leading their two and a half day training on spiritual formation and another one on parent engagement. They offer close to 50 unique training events, ranging from board governance to marketing to classroom best practices. They even offer a training on how to teach the great books.

And the best part of all, well, thanks to the generosity of the Herzog Foundation, these training events, including lodging, are completely free for Christian educators. Institutes are located around the country in beautiful locations, including at the Museum of the Bible in Washington, D.C., and the Reagan Library in Santa Barbara. Don't miss this incredible opportunity.

Check out the details at theherzogfoundation.com. Well, Chad, as we think about, again, the cultural moment we're in and the pragmatism of the day, and you ask the average parent, hey,

what language would you want your child to study? I'm guessing most parents would say probably Spanish, because they just figure you're in the U.S. It's just helpful. And yet, there is a lot of argument to be made that sure, we understand, and there's nothing wrong with studying these kind of modern languages, but there are values, are there not, in having that Latin base before you go and study Spanish. Talk about that.

Yeah. Well, and I think I may have said this in one of our, before we started, but sometimes I get, maybe just to be a little provocative, I'll say pragmatism, if you wanna study Latin, don't do it because it's useful. And I'm being provocative, because I do think there is a use, but I just think I wanna, sometimes I wanna redefine that, and part of it is actually just submitting yourself to something that you don't fully understand.

And so I think oftentimes, we have to think a little bit differently, and going to a classical school, and part of being, for me being a part of Ambrose, I had to learn to think differently. Okay, what is classical education? Why is that different from even just a regular run-of-the-mill Christian school, or a public school? What is it that makes that unique? And I think you submit yourself to a tradition of learning that is not obvious. And so I think Latin actually is a really good way into sort of submitting yourself into that tradition.

You've basically said, once you start learning Latin, you've basically said, all right, I'm gonna recognize that there are things about this learning in this way that I don't, I can't foresee exactly, but I know that it can be beneficial. So I mean, that said, I had never studied Spanish formally. Last winter, I read a Spanish grammar while riding on my bike trainer, and I- Hang on a second, wait, I gotta stop you on that.

You're on your bike training, and you're reading a Spanish grammar. Wow, okay, that's not common, but I'm glad the tempo is exciting enough to keep you pedaling fast. That's right.

Well, and I use that as an example, and then I was able to, at this seminary where I teach, we have some people who only speak Spanish, and I could go in, and I could say hello, and how are you? And I was learning things about Spanish because I already knew how languages work, and I already had the base vocabulary for much of Spanish. So then I could read really quickly, even if I couldn't pronounce everything perfectly, I could look at a Spanish text and make out a lot of it. And so there are things like that, like yeah, so I did French, I did Spanish, read a little Italian.

I mean, you do start to see a lot of tremendous benefit. But, so I think there is definitely a sense in which you learn Latin, and you really think about what is a language, how does it work, and once you've begun down that path, any other language you approach, you've already done 25, 30% of the intellectual work needed to even engage a new language. Yeah, and there's first person singular and first person plural.

Like that, just, there's lots of languages that that term is gonna apply to. You just, you know the structure of how languages are put together. So, and I appreciate your answer there.

You're right, we do need to be cautious to not just go after the pragmatism. And I really wanna just emphasize what you just said, because I think most people listening agree that what's lacking in our culture today is kind of this idea of fortitude or a will to proceed. A lot of folks today just give up too easily.

And I think when we're in a Google Translate world, it's real, it is tedious to go have to parse Latin verbs and work through that. But you were, you know, maybe it's a mental pushup if you wanna think of it that way. But you're forcing discipline.

That's right. Would that not have value later when you're in the workforce and your boss asks you to do something hard, and you're like, I can handle hard. I'm used to hard.

I took Latin. Oh, I think, absolutely, yeah. So we shouldn't, I mean, I think that's a really good point, because I think it would be very easy, Davey's found a Latin guy, and he loves Latin.

So everybody should love, like nobody, no, there are times where it's just not fun. I'm sorry. It's just not fun parsing verbs and having to basically do what feels like a very painful mental Sudoku game or something where you're having to move stuff all around.

But we're trying to put a good light on it. That's right. All right, so that was a good practical thing is it's gonna prep you for other languages you might wanna go and study.

And we've talked before about just accessing original text and some of the advantages there. Can you think of any examples? I mean, as a classroom teacher where you guys were maybe reading something that you just would have really missed the heart of this had you not understood some of the language nuances that were there. Well, I'll give one of my favorites.

I taught at a classical school a couple hours a week last year, and it was a Christian school. So we were reading some of the Bible, and the word in Latin is *lignum*, is the word for tree. So basically, there's a connection between when Adam and Eve go into the garden, there's a tree, as we would say it in English, but it sounds like wood in Latin, and actually in Greek, and it has to do with the Hebrew.

But anyway, but the point being, that connection, as we were reading it, they were able to see, oh, wait, the wood in the garden is the wood that is similar to and connected with the wood that Christ dies on. It's also similar to the wood in Psalm 1 that's planted by the streams of life, or cursed is anyone who hangs on the tree or the wood in Deuteronomy. And so it's actually that same word, and so you have a through line throughout scripture.

This one word, wood, pops in Latin, where it doesn't in English, because in English, it'll go back and forth between wood, tree, sometimes forest, and so you could lose that actually underneath all of that, if you're reading it in Latin or Greek, it's actually the same word. And so a lot of the church fathers who I studied for my dissertation would have picked that up and said, see, Christ is throughout. Right.

That's a great example. I mean, what a powerful example, and how unfortunate in many ways that we only get to read the Bible missing that much greater depth that would come alive. It's like it goes from 2D to 3D when you understand the language in that way.

It's really, that's a great example, which I think ties to this next kind of value proposition of why we study Latin, which is the idea of cultural literacy. So you and I both had many experiences with students traveling in Europe. I can think of trips even to Washington, DC with our middle schoolers in the past, and you walk up to a great monument or building, and it's in Latin, and most people just walk past it.

Our kids stop and go, wait a minute, I think I know what that might mean. So how do you see it enhancing cultural literacy, which again is so needed in the modern world? Yeah, e pluribus unum. We have it on our coins.

Which no one knows what it means, but yeah. It's a typo, right? No, that's right. Yeah, I mean, I think that's right.

I mean, I was just talking to a history professor where I teach, and he was talking about trying to introduce freshmen to Augustine, and why Rome looms so large throughout Western culture. And in fact, like you say, you can't walk through DC, you can't look at the Congress Hall when the president's giving the State of the Union without seeing the Fasces behind them, or the eagle, or all of these symbols that were symbols of Rome. I mean, you know, Rome itself just looms large in Western history.

And why do we have pillars? Why do we have, you know, all these things that- The architecture, everything is part of that. And so I just, yeah. No, but I think cultural literacy, again, you asked the typical parent today, we all see such confusion in the minds of young people in terms of just their national identity, their sense of history of where they've come from, you know, the basic one, like, isn't the West bad? Do we even want to study the West? I mean, this is unfortunately seeping its way into kind of modern Christian family thinking.

So yeah, keep going on that. Like cultural literacy is a big deal, and language is a big part of it. Yeah, I mean, so those are, so yeah, so you could look at sort of, we might think of those, I don't love it, but we could call it secular.

I mean, at least, you know, but like we could think about, you know, national identities and things that have connection to Latin. I mean, of course, I gave a Christian one with the word. But yeah, all of those things are just part of our inheritance.

And so, yeah, I mean, I think, you know, having a robust conversation about truth, goodness, and beauty, you know, are things that tie us to generations past. And, but why? Why those? Why are those the transcendentals? We forget unity and oneness, which comes in there often, too. But, you know, why are these the things? Well, they're because for thousands of years, Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Augustine, you know, have thought through all of these things and

actually help us with the questions.

You know, cultural identity feels less important in making money, but it's the most important thing in thinking about why am I here? Why am I doing the things that I'm doing? What have other people said about the, you know, the power of ideas, love, all of these things, right? So why is something beautiful? And why, you know, why is an upside-down toilet urinal in a museum not beautiful? Well, I need a sense of what beauty is to know what's ugly, and that's ugly. And that cultural literacy is inherently tied to the original source material where things are being described, which is, you know, an interesting question. I don't, maybe help us think about this for a second.

When you think about classical education, you think about, well, great quote, great books. And when you think about these books that span the millennia, but so many of them are obviously not in English originally. So maybe just kind of a broad question, but I mean, if you take the typical classical Christian schools reading list and you were to reverse back to the first edition of that, what language, Latin obviously was a big part of those early writings.

Where does Greek fit in, where does French fit in? I mean, just give people a sense of where this stuff came from. Yeah, so I mean, I guess it's Mortimer Adler. Mortimer Adler writes the 50 Great Books.

So as far as I'm aware, most of those, yeah, would be, you know, some of the earliest ones would be Greek, then you'd have many in Latin. You have Dante, who's writing, Dante's one of your first Greek writers in Italian, actually, but in a kind of modern Neo-Latin language, we might say, a European, a modern European language. But even after, but Dante writes in Latin, too.

So he has works in Latin and, you know, Aquinas and others would be in Latin, Augustine. And then after that, you do start to see what, you know, like I say, I call them Neo-Latin, that is like French, Spanish, Italian, Portuguese, Romanian, there's others, Piedmontese and L'Occitane and other ones. But there are other languages, but all of those, but as far as the great books, yeah, I mean, many of them, Voltaire would be French, Cervantes in Spanish, yeah.

If you took the 50, just to use Adler's kind of 50 great book series, which were, I mean, how many were in English? I mean, could you even? Uh, oof, pardon, I mean, is Jane Austen? I don't even remember, I was just like. Five of them, I mean, it's really, to the point that this is, you know, why, if you're gonna read something, because we make a big deal that we don't wanna read quote, pre-digested textbooks, meaning we extracted the abstract into an anthology. We really wanna read the original source, but we really don't, we kind of, 45 of the five, if we're gonna use that number, are actually not, we're still a step or two removed from the original.

So, I mean, it's a good observation there. Well, I wanna take another break and I wanna come back and maybe talk just for a little bit, given kind of from your kind of professional educator standpoint of the ways that Latin is taught, because like anything, everything's not always done

the same and some people speak it and some people write it and how does it work? So, I'd be curious your thoughts on that. Why don't we take a quick break and we'll come right back.

Hey, Base Camp Live listeners, a recent Pew Research study revealed that only 30% of millennial and Gen Z parents live within a 100 mile radius of extended family. That means that many families are missing the wisdom and support of older generations and more than ever, we need strong, consistent school communities to walk next to us, providing rich connection and helpful weekly tips. That is exactly why I created Zipcast.

Zipcast gives schools a proven platform to communicate more personally and effectively with their parent community. Imagine as a parent receiving a short weekly audio message from your school leadership, not just announcements, but real insights into what's on their hearts and minds paired with practical wisdom from national parenting and educational experts like Keith McCurdy and Justin Early, along with experts on classical Christian education. We even include short testimonials and parenting tips from fellow parents all around the country.

You can listen anywhere and at any time. And now with Zipcast 2.0, schools can customize their messages even more, offering a truly personal and engaging way to build connection and shared vision. If you're a school leader and not yet using Zipcast, I wanna encourage you to consider it for the 25, 26 school year.

And if you're a parent at a school that is not yet using Zipcast, take a moment and encourage your leadership to explore it. It's easy to use, affordable, and effective. And in today's fast-paced world, Zipcast is a proven tool used by over 60 schools this past school year to deliver encouragement, insights, and connections in just 10 minutes a week.

We like to say it's about encouraging you on the go with what you need to know. Check it all out at zipcast.media to hold your spot as we have limited spaces available for the upcoming school year. Chad, one of the great gifts of a classical education is the ability to have the mind of a student connect to the mind of this great individual.

It is literally like time traveling, and it's a pretty, I've always wanted a time travel machine, but in effect, that's what we get to do. We get to take our students to, hey, hang out for a couple hours with Mr. Aristotle and see if you can pick up a few wise things. To the point of our conversation, it seems like you really do need to know the language that that amazing person spoke in in those early days to really derive as much as you can out of it.

What are your thoughts on time travel? And why? Yeah, well, it does, I mean, right? So you start to have to think a little bit differently about what you're, the place that you're going, right? So if you wanna go to ancient Rome, one of the examples I've used before is when you say, I have it in my soul to do something, and that's an expression in Latin that would sound weird if I were to walk around in English and say, I have it in my soul that I'm gonna play pickleball today. But that's how you speak Latin. And so it just shows you even a different sense of what it means to be human in a way, because it is part of, that's the way that they conceived of themselves as

more than just their physical attributes.

They're more than just material. Or the word for pay attention is to turn your soul towards something, a similar idea. *Anima vetere*.

And so it's like, well, if I'm gonna, I used the example earlier, I've always loved that. One of the great descriptions of love is the attention that you pay to something. And so in Latin, you actually say, hey, turn your soul towards this.

But if you do that, right? What is it that you're gonna get, right? The reward is great. And so learning Latin helps you to have that expression. And so I say it's like time travel because that's not how we speak in English and it'd be weird if I walked around like that to people.

But when you're in a Latin classroom, that's more natural and it's easier. And then the light bulb goes off and then you're like, oh, now I know. I mean, it's not perfect, but I know a little bit more what it's like to think like a Roman.

Well, and again, why do we take students to senior trips to Europe? I mean, it's an interest, it's really, I think you're making, we would be making the same case because we want them to kind of taste and see and walk and experience through the Vatican because you can only talk about things so much, but now you're getting it in there, in that art and architecture and color and experience. And so language is just another touch point in a sense to really understand, which is a great point. Well, so let's kind of wind things down around this topic of how do you teach Latin? And you just said some Latin, which I didn't think was spoken, so that was pretty amazing.

And I have hired Latin teachers that spoke Latin because it certainly, in my mind, makes it more interesting and more dynamic. So maybe just speak for a moment about how does this work? Because I think a lot of the drudgery and maybe even the shortcomings sometimes of schools that teach Latin is it's literally nothing more than just eat the sawdust and memorize these fairly dry conjugation tables of things. So I mean, help us understand how to do it well and what are your opinions on that? And then talk a little bit about this curriculum you've written.

Yeah, well, thank you. So yeah, actually, I think often and very highly of my time I spent at Ambrose, and it was going to Italy that made me think about what I was doing differently in the French classroom than the Latin classroom. My French students could read some basic things, they could say some things to me, and I was like, why is it so much harder in a Latin classroom or a Greek classroom? And Anita Wasdahl was one who encouraged me to think about it, and so I got to go and speak it.

So yeah, so we used the book, Hans Orberg's *Familia Romana* in the *Lingua Latina* series, and it is a great book. It's written entirely in Latin, so that can be hard for a lot of teachers who aren't used to speaking and thinking immersively. So the book that I wrote is, I call it a half-step towards Orberg.

But yeah, I think that when we think about teaching languages and teaching Latin, it can be drudgery, a word that I've used. I've never said eating sawdust, but I like it. But that's exactly what Augustine said, right? So I mean, in Augustine's Confessions Book One, he talks about how he hated Greek because he says the tables were rammed into him.

Now, he also would take beatings for what he got wrong. It's all relative. So if you said *luo*, *lue*, well, no, that's right.

Luo, *lue*, *lue*, so if you said it wrong in Greek, you would get beat, and so he hated that. But he said he loved Latin, and why did he love Latin? He said, because I learned it while I was playing games with my nurse and my friends, basically. So he talks about games, he talks about joy, he talks about love.

And when you have those things around the study of a language, even something difficult can have some more enjoyment. So I like to try to bring joy into the classroom a little bit by songs, by games, by reading. And when even, like I taught elementary school, Anita also told me once, she said, if you really believe that you can speak Latin, if you can get a kid to properly conjugate a word without thinking about it, that's like the high mark of teaching immersively.

And I did, it did happen once in a sixth grade class. Someone used the correct direct object without me having to do it, and I was like, I've done it. I've arrived.

But basically, like my, you know, these are nine, 10-year-olds, and they wanted to speak the language, right? They wanted to communicate, as Augustine says, heart to heart. And so they wanted that connection in the language. And so once they understand that that's, you know, that language doesn't just have to be on the page, but it can be heart to heart, it opens up a whole new world, and then you start to use the language.

And then when you use the language to put it back into English, you know, one of my favorite ones at first that I use is it occurs to me, literally comes from the Latin word to run into. And so the image of it occurs to me is so much fuller. I just got run into.

And so, you know, so that then translates back, right? You're not gonna be speaking Latin on the streets of St. Louis or Boise or wherever, but in your own head, you're gonna say a word like occurs, and I just chuckle to myself, like, oh, I just got hit by that. That's really good. Well, you're right, there's joy, there's even some humor in this.

As I said earlier, as you described it, I feel like it's going from 2D to 3D. It's just much more dynamic and much more interesting. So, and just without getting too technical, just because you have nuanced your curriculum as more ecclesial approach, which is really of the church.

So kind of explain or help us understand kind of what the nuances you've done in your newest curriculum here. Yeah, so just, yeah, so I wrote a book, Ecclesiastical Latin, A Primer of the Language of the Church. And I developed that while teaching at a university level, but also some at a high school level and at a classical school where, you know, our students are usually

a little cut above.

But yeah, so that has to do with the language of the church. So part of that curriculum is I have a prayer that goes with every chapter. The readings often come from the Vulgate.

So what I tried to do, even with those readings, is I basically simplify them early on. So if the verbs are different tenses that we haven't learned yet, or different moods, if they're subjunctive, which is everybody's, you know, gets terrified by, I take that out. So it's still readable, it's still understandable, but some of these harder grammar things are not there.

So then, you know, so the students can have a little bit of an excitement of saying, I'm reading the Bible. I'm reading about Jesus talking to Peter. And I can think about the fact that he uses two different words for love or, and what that might mean.

And so you can begin to have access to that, but reading in a way that, you know, reading whole chunks, like you and I probably learned Greek or Hebrew similarly, where you would do these like one-off sentences that never had to do with each other. And you just were like, I wanna try to read something. And so I, what I try to do, I do have some sentences that are like that.

But I also have, and they're usually from, you know, original authors, but I also have a section where you can read. Like, okay, I'm gonna read the Adam and Eve story, that's where I start. And something really, you know, and it's obviously not what is in Genesis, but it's enough that it's a story that's already recognized and you can say, look, I just read five or six sentences.

Which is, you know. Which is so fulfilling, and you're right, isn't that, it's so unfortunate that we go through all of this, the hard work, you never get the benefit from figuring it out. It's like, you know, as a kid, and you pass, you know, the note around, and you've got kind of this little, you know, key to decode it, and you finally figure out what it said.

That's like, oh, wow, we unlocked it. It's very exciting. So I love that you're building in that kind of reward within the work, so.

Can I make one plug real quick? Yeah, plug away, yeah. I'll just, I just have to get this out there. Some people will say that Ecclesiastical is not really like a dialect or something of Latin, because it is this, so the same language that Cicero speaks is the language that Augustine speaks that Jerome translates into.

So there really is one language. I just try to target sources that might be of a special benefit to a Christian, and so that's what, that's, yeah. And for another day's conversation, because I think it's a good point to end on, is there's always this sort of underlying concern of why are we so fascinated with the pagans? Why do we spend so much time with them? Are we maybe learning things or reading things that are not really edifying? And I love the fact that, no, we're actually using it to decode scripture even better.

I mean, that is ultimately the goal, certainly within Latin in the church. So, well, Chad, thanks so much for your insights, your encouragement. I know it's always helpful to be reminded of why we do the things that are very out of step with the modern culture, but I can't think of a better undertaking for the modern world than to go deep into these great classic languages.

So thanks for your insights. You're welcome. It's been a pleasure.

One of my favorite things to talk about. I know, I can tell. Thanks again.

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See you back next week.