

Reviews

***Teach Like a Disciple:
Exploring Jesus' Instructive Relationships from an Educational Perspective***
Jillian Nerhus Lederhouse. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2016.

Reviewed by Polly Treviño, Houston Baptist University

In *Teach Like a Disciple*, Jill Lederhouse explores how Jesus related to others in the Gospels. Lederhouse analyzes how Jesus taught and applies these understandings to modern-day educational contexts. Through studying Jesus' example, both novice and experienced educators can learn lessons on integrating faith into practice. Though it is written for general educators in PK-12 contexts, *Teach Like a Disciple* will appeal to Christian English language educators as well. Several chapters discuss working with students of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and understanding students' unique personal and educational needs. All of the chapters emphasize relationships in the teaching-learning process. These are essential understandings for all educators, but they are especially critical for teachers of English language learners.

Summary

Chapter 1 introduces the book, its purpose, and its structure; Chapter 12 is a concluding chapter. In between, Chapters 2 through 11 explore interactions between Jesus and a specific individual in the Gospels (e.g., the Samaritan woman at the well, John the Apostle, Nicodemus, Peter, and others). Each individual is recast as one of Jesus' "pupils," and each has diverse needs not unlike the students in PK-12 classrooms today. The Samaritan woman is the student whose cultural background differs from the teacher's; John, the quiet introvert; Nicodemus, the gifted student; and Peter, the insecure attention-seeker. The chapters have a parallel structure built around five questions:

- What do we know about [the individual in the interaction]?
- What do we know about Jesus from this interaction?
- What can we learn from [the individual in the interaction]?
- What can we learn from Jesus in this interaction?
- What can we, as educators, learn from this interaction?

By answering these questions about each interaction, Lederhouse systematically guides the

reader through the theological and educational implications of Jesus' lessons. Each chapter closes with a one-sentence statement – “To teach like a disciple, we must...” – which summarizes the Christian educational principle that readers should take away.

Commentary

Teach Like a Disciple was a pleasure to read. Sometimes a Bible study, sometimes a primer on being a Christian educator, the text balances theology with application to educational practice. This is accomplished through the structure of the chapters, which is effective at helping the reader understand Jesus the Savior and Jesus the Master Teacher. Lederhouse skillfully weaves the familiar Gospel passages with analysis, historical and sociocultural context, and professional educational literature. She connects Jesus' words and actions to modern educational concepts, such as classroom management, differentiated instruction, and a growth mindset. As Lederhouse points readers to Jesus, we learn who he is as Savior and the salvation he offers. We see Christ's love for humanity in his love for his “students,” and, through his model, we understand how to see our students as he sees them. We learn how to become relational, loving teachers ourselves.

I recommend this book for both novice and experienced educators who are interested in understanding Jesus the Master Teacher. Novice educators will be reassured that they can win their students over and still hold them to high standards. Experienced educators will find encouragement and affirmation in relating to all students, including those often perceived as “difficult” – those with special needs, behavioral difficulties, or culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Teach Like a Disciple was moving to read individually, but the book would be equally powerful to read in a group context. The book could be used formally as a supplemental text in pre-service teacher programs, either in an educational foundations course or in a capstone/clinical internship seminar. It would also be effective for informal discussion in a professional learning community or even as a Bible study among educators or pre-service educators. No matter the context, readers will be stirred by the encounter with Jesus, Savior and Teacher.

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Caring for Words in a Culture of Lies

Marilyn Chandler McEntyre. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Co., 2009.

Reviewed by Emanuel Padilla, Moody Bible Institute

With appropriate urgency, Marilyn McEntyre begins her book by getting promptly to the point: “Caring for language is a moral issue” (p. 1). According to McEntyre, language-care should concern everyone, even beyond Christian English language educators, because the words we use and how we use them shape our way of being together. “Words are entrusted to us as equipment for our life together, to help us survive, guide, and nourish one another” (p. 2). McEntyre encourages her readers to resist the pressures poisoning the English language and to take on disciplines that, used correctly, will nurture it back to health. The pressures poisoning English are many: news media driven by corporate interests, technologies that encourage users to “be content to trade precision for speed” (p. 12), the loss of healthy discourse, and the widespread dependence on market language. The overall problem is that words have become “industrialized,” processed like food and emptied of their health benefit (p. 16). This cultural milieu affects both the instructor and student, and for this reason McEntyre’s book is a timely, prophetic call to steward words.

Summary

The book begins with a diagnostic of the current cultural context. McEntyre’s argument can be divided into two types. The first is a statistical analysis of the current state of language. Among the data points included, she notes the level of illiteracy and media intake in the U.S., and when appropriate, she pulls from her experience as a professor to confirm the data. Her use of anecdotal evidence continues throughout the rest of the book, providing compelling stories that support her proposals. Secondly, she argues for change in our practice by anticipating the potential outcomes if current language-use trends continue. Turning from diagnosis to strategy, McEntyre distills three actions necessary to restore and cultivate healthy language. Instructors must help students: 1) deepen and sharpen reading skills, 2) cultivate habits of speaking and listening that foster precision and clarity, and 3) practice *poesis* – “to be makers and doers of the word” (pp. 9-10).

McEntyre proposes twelve strategies for the recovery of the English language, giving attention to each in distinct chapters, and using them to support the actions listed above. The movement of the book is pleasantly simple, moving from strategies that are related to our affections to strategies related to language-rich rituals. These final three chapters are particularly stimulating because they confront the liturgies related to media and market speech. The book envisions a culture built from habits of language-use that challenge speakers to practice and play with beautiful words. English language educators will find in the final three chapters a theological orientation that roots good use of beautiful words in the Word Himself.

Commentary

Christian English language educators work in the intersection of *what is* and *what could be*. ESL students often need to make immediate gains (particularly adult learners), so instructors are pressured to teach functional English, that is, English that is useful in the workplace and market. Conversely, instructors have the opportunity to create new cultural patterns by forming the language practices of those assimilating to the English-speaking world. McEntyre's book is dedicated to inspiring and even guiding instructors toward this latter possibility. For instance, she encourages her readers to teach students to "Love the Long Sentence" as a way of starving the impulse to indulge "our vulgar appetites for action" (p. 134). "Slowing down, for a contemporary reader, is a countercultural act. Nearly everything in the momentum of modern life urges us onward at an accelerating pace" (p. 133). Each of the "stewardship strategies" suggested by McEntyre is a countercultural move.

Readers may initially think McEntyre's strategies are elitist, that the proposals are for the privileged. McEntyre herself is aware of this and treats this concern as it presents itself in each chapter. For instance, in "Tell the Truth," McEntyre reminds the audience that demanding precision is not the same as demanding sophistication or even technicality. In fact, quoting from a wide variety of novelists, McEntyre reveals that precision often relies on understatement and is countercultural to the hyperbolic tendencies of media-speak. It is important to remember the culture McEntyre has in view. Media and market language dominate the major spheres of culture (such as education, politics, and the arts), and by these forms of English many are excluded from active participation in and agency over their community. In an article published immediately after the United States 2016 presidential election, it was reported that poetry was increasingly

being used by people trying to make sense of social events. The elevated language of verse provided the solace people desired (Garber, 2016). It appears that the social context is such that the public intuitively recognizes the value of higher language. It is to this *hungry* group that McEntyre commends herself.

Caring for Words is beautifully written and stands as an example of the very practices it promotes. McEntyre quotes liberally from sociologists, novelists, and essayists, providing a bibliography of resources for instructors looking for tools to begin practicing poetry and teaching a love for the long sentence. The book will serve any instructor looking for long term strategies for English education and cultural transformation. In a culture increasingly lost for words, *Caring for Words* serves as a reminder of the essential language tools for communities of people. To the teachers, ministers, and speakers that McEntyre addresses in this book, the call for activism should be energizing and the strategies proposed are actionable in ways that transform the reader into part of the resistance, part of those refusing to let the English language perish, and with it our ability to be in community.

Reference

Garber, M. (2016, November 10). Still, Poetry Will Rise. *The Atlantic*. Retrieved from <https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2016/11/still-poetry-will-rise/507266/>

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Dangerous Territory: My Misguided Quest to Save the World

Amy Peterson. Grand Rapids, MI: Discovery House, 2017.

Reviewed by Dani Shepard

This book sheds light on the complications of missions as well as the spiritual highs and lows of the Christian walk. Peterson captures the reader's attention with a personal narrative of her experiences teaching ESL overseas with a Christian organization. As she sets out to "save the world," she discovers that she has plenty to learn about the love that God has for both the world and herself.

Summary

The book is divided into three sections, in addition to which there are “Interludes” on topics such as the history of short-term missions, the history of women in missions, and a dialogue about imagining other ways of doing missions. These are interspersed throughout the book in accordance with the topics being addressed in Peterson’s personal narrative.

Part One is entitled “Sent.” Peterson begins her narrative by describing the circumstances and motivations that pushed her towards overseas missions. This includes her discomfort with some of the baggage that can come with the term *missionary*, such as Western imperialism, the destruction of native cultures, and religious wars, none of which she desired to represent. As a result, she would say that she was going to live in a foreign culture, teach English, and represent Christ in her day-to-day life, avoiding the *missionary* label.

Peterson addresses her motivations by stating she was “equal parts zeal for God’s glory, hunger for adventure, and fear of failure” (p. 23). She transparently owns up to her mixed motivations for desiring to teach English overseas and the variety of feelings she was experiencing as she processed her fear of commitment, her need to save others, and her desire for an adventurous life. With the groundwork laid, Part One goes on to recount her move overseas (to an unnamed Asian country), including her arrival, a honeymoon stage, and her first year of teaching. She invites the reader into some of the relationships she formed with her students and colleagues and vulnerably processes the thoughts and issues she faced as she settled into her new home.

Part Two is entitled “Stripped.” As Peterson returned to the U.S. for the summer after her first year, she was met with reverse culture shock. She was especially conflicted about being safe at home while her students were facing difficulties with the authorities that stemmed in part from their relationship with her. As a result, just two weeks prior to her return to Asia, she was notified that she would not be allowed to do so. Instead, her organization placed her in Cambodia and she was thrown into turmoil and spiritual crisis. Her narrative at this point is raw and honest as she questions God’s love and goodness in the midst of a deep spiritual and emotional valley.

Part Three is entitled “Surrendered.” In her final chapters, Peterson brings us through to the other side of her spiritual crisis as she learns what surrendering to God means. This includes teaching in a place she did not feel fully called to. Her major spiritual focus is coming to terms with God’s love for her:

I had never been before God with nothing to offer... I walked toward God with empty hands and heart...and I understood what I had always believed: that God loved me anyway... I finally understood, both mentally and emotionally, that the sentence didn't need anything added. God loved me. Full stop. (p. 218)

Peterson wraps readers into her messy spiritual questions and doubts as well as the promises of God that she comes to trust and rely upon. There is no clean conclusion to this story apart from Peterson's acceptance of God's love for her and how that informs her path forward. She ends her book with a summary of some of the lessons she learned from her experiences. God's love and grace do not tie up all the loose ends, but they do provide her with a Cornerstone to build upon.

Commentary

Through Peterson's account of her personal experience teaching English overseas with a Christian organization, she humbly invites her readers into the messiness of her cross-cultural experiences in Asia. She transparently shares her joys and sorrows, as well as her mistakes, arrogance, and misinformed ideas that she had about missions and serving God. Her learning experiences become ours.

Some of the themes or issues that emerge along the way include misconceived notions about the purposes and methods of missions, the role of the missionary, and TESOL as a form of ministry. In narrating this aspect of her pilgrimage, she invites us to consider life direction, grief, learning to love and serve God, and how God's love is enough. She invites us into a realistic spiritual journey that any Christian can relate to, but especially those with cross-cultural and teaching experience.

One of Peterson's strengths in this book is that she addresses negative stigmas towards missions in an honest way as she both acknowledges her own mixed-up motives and the complexities of the issues themselves. She shares with us her shortcomings and walks us through her journey. She shows us how many of her assumptions were not true as she theologically reflects on her firsthand experiences.

Peterson's two major themes are perceptions about missions and a transparent analysis of her spiritual journey, particularly its valleys. This book thus aids in spurring deeper thinking in these two areas. For me it was a breath of fresh air to read such an honest and relatable narrative.

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gains experience, she is looking for ways to develop her interests in curriculum design and English for Bible and Theology.

***Reflecting on Critical Incidents in Language Education:
40 Dilemmas for Novice TESOL Professionals***

Thomas S. C. Farrell and Laura Baecher. London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2017.

Reviewed by Marilyn Lewis, University of Auckland

Reading the name of the first of this book's authors might set people wondering whether he had anything fresh to say on the topic. While it is true that he has been reflecting on reflection for some time now, each new book manages a fresh angle, in this case through its range of contexts, its task-based format, and its intended readership. As defined in a book by the same publisher, a critical incident is "an unanticipated moment or event during a lesson that can be analysed later for the sake of gaining further insight into teaching" (Liu & Berger, 2015, p. 81). Novice teachers won't have to search to think of an unanticipated moment in their own classrooms and, quite possibly, it will parallel one of the 40 dealt with here.

Summary

Topics are categorised into ten chapters of four incidents each. The dilemmas are introduced by real teachers into whose shoes the reader is invited to step (p. 3). The book's title and subtitle make clear the format and the intended readership. As the details will show, it would also make a handy resource for teacher educators.

The incidents cover various contexts including private and government schools in EFL and ESL countries. Students range from primary school to young adults, with a majority of school age, and vary hugely in their educational and societal backgrounds. In three cases there is an EAP emphasis and in one the class is for future teachers of English. A few teachers speak their students' language but most do not.

Three chapter headings that stood out for me initially as addressing commonly reported problems were 2, 4 and 9. In chapter 2, "Curriculum Development," Cheung's dilemma is having to use a textbook designed for native speakers of English which her students are not. An observer who noticed her carefully prepared supplementary resources said that she should not be "dumbing down" the content (p. 33) given the standards set by the examinations her students would be required to sit. This criticism will resonate with many teachers, not all of them new,

who try and make a prescribed course more accessible. Reading this experience suggests one further group which could benefit from this book, namely, school administrators and supervisors.

Then in Chapter 4 on “Classroom Management” Li Jing and Neeta both face the problem of off-task behaviour, while for Min-Jun as a new teacher the challenge is how to fill the time in two-hour lessons. Jorge, who speaks the same first language as his students, finds that encouraging use of the new language is the challenge. Chapter 9, “Addressing Workplace Challenges,” looks at problems that can arise through the approaches of colleagues, through the presence of special needs learners, and through an examination-focussed atmosphere.

The first chapter, on creating a positive classroom community, could be read at any stage of one’s teaching life. As an example, the introduction makes a wise distinction between showing an interest in students’ personal lives and, on the other hand, the need “to create some boundaries” (p. 15) for the teacher’s own good. Chapter 3, “Teaching Mixed Level/Large Classes,” deals with concerns that are also touched on in the classroom management chapter. While a smart response to the title could be that all classes are, in some way or another, multilevel, size does accentuate these differences. Thuy, for instance, reports teaching up to 50 students in the same room.

Chapters 5 to 8 focus on the four skills, sometimes in integrated classes and at other times on courses dedicated to this skill. Miko, who was teaching listening to university students in a general EFL course, mentions his response when the class reported problems with the lessons, mainly their boredom and the lack of purpose. That feedback made Miko think about the teacher’s role when the prescribed materials are of little interest to the students. (The problem of boring textbooks is not limited to listening classes, of course.)

Commentary

Even if this book were only a collection of incidents it would make interesting reading, but then teacher educators would be left to design ways of using them. Fortunately for the latter’s preparation time, the “reflecting” part of the title is well attended to, even before the incident is presented. Question starters such as “What is your understanding of...?”, “Why is it important for...?”, “Have you taught or observed...?” and a few “Should...?” questions encourage reflection on readers’ own experiences before they read what others have been through.

Then, following each incident, but before the reader's own views are sought, there is a section headed "X tries to problem-solve". Here we read of self-help moves. Some teachers thought up an action they could take next time, while others sought help from experienced colleagues such as a guidance counsellor. As noted above, one or two had unsolicited suggestions from an official classroom observer. Readers without the luxury of outside advice will find plenty throughout the book.

Since a book review usually includes suggestions or evaluations, here's one thought for the next book: How about a collection of taped reflections between new teachers and the people who come to observe them in action? Given Baecher's role in working with pre-service teachers, this should be easy to organise. The discussions might include references to sections of teacher education books which new teachers have used in their training as well as to recently published articles in the form of case studies.

The real measure of this book's success will be in its helpfulness to the intended readership. Once I have used it with that group, as planned, I might have further suggestions.

Reference

Liu, J., & Berger, C. M. (2015). *TESOL: A guide*. London and New York: Bloomsbury.

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Resilience: Bouncing Back through English

R. Michael Medley. Bloomington, IN: WestBow Press, 2017.

Reviewed by Robin Gingerich, LCC International University

Today's glossy language learning textbooks are often geared toward upper middle class professionals who are learning English for promotion, travel, or prestige. *Resilience* is foundationally different; the book's holistic approach to students provides a much needed resource to teachers who want to offer more than language instruction. Unfortunately, many students have been displaced by war, traumatized by personal loss and pain, or displaced from

their homes due to violence. They are in our classes to learn English to make a better life for themselves, often after suffering hardship, trauma, and loss in their own lives. Christian English teachers are called not only to teach grammar and reading, but also to offer hope and support for all students. This book is the perfect blend of language focus and content rich material that addresses both practical language needs and personal encouragement. Dr. Michael Medley uses his own academic experience and knowledge of teaching trauma-affected learners to accurately fill the gap in the textbook market – we needn't ignore the difficult personal histories of our students. Stories of strength, exercises in reflection, and stress-relieving activities lay the foundation for building resilience in our students' lives and create a safe place to learn English. This book helps teachers coach students to find healthy strategies to cope with their trauma.

Summary

At its core, this is a language textbook grounded in communicative language instruction for young adult learners at the high intermediate to advanced levels of English. The scope and sequence logically outline the reading skills, language functions, and language structures which are presented in each of the 15 chapters. With conflict, trauma, and resilience as the content of the lessons, this unique book is a powerful tool for teachers who truly care about their students. *Resilience* steps carefully through difficult topics such as recognizing violence, defining trauma, responding to threats, and noticing the cycle of violence while at the same time offering hope through redemptive themes such as healing listening, showing mercy, seeking justice, and building peace. The topics and exercises are grounded in the materials of Eastern Mennonite University's Strategies in Trauma Awareness and Resilience (STAR) program. The author is very clear that teachers are not expected to turn language classrooms into counseling centers or therapy sessions; rather the book offers concrete ways to provide a safe place for students to make sense of their stories in a supportive, learning community.

Each chapter begins by engaging learners in the topic through questions or an interactive activity. The first reading is an academic text focused on key terms and ideas, followed by reading comprehension and vocabulary tasks to ensure students' understanding. Students are led through a variety of both interactive and individual word studies in such a way that the content is reinforced. Each chapter contains a grammar focus requiring students to use a particular grammatical structure in a logical context. The students are now prepared to read a true personal

story of someone who has overcome difficult circumstances or traumatic events. Students see these people as examples of resilience, as the stories exemplify heroism and admirable traits in the face of trauma. These stories of hope and strength are followed by activities promoting language production and true dialogue in the classroom setting. The final section is likely the most unique. As students reach the end of the unit, the “Extend your learning” section encourages students to use their multiple intelligences to develop strategies for healing from trauma. Through music, journaling, drawing, movement and breathing exercises, students are challenged to process their own personal experiences while developing lifelong attitudes toward forgiveness and reconciliation. To wrap up each chapter, students are encouraged to assess their own learning.

Commentary

Resilience speaks with calm reassurance to all students who desperately need to hear stories of hope. The book does not gloss over the harsh realities of war and difficult circumstances. Instead, this text reassures students by giving them tangible, safe ways to deal with their own hurt through learning the vocabulary of both trauma and healing. Students read stories of the hope and resilience of others who have lived through difficult times. The book promotes a variety of communicative language activities that work well in the classroom. The vocabulary is presented and reinforced throughout the chapters. The instructions are very detailed, providing the teacher with step by step instructions for each activity. There is a warm, calm tone throughout. The book is very “efficient” in the sense that the pages are relatively dense with black and white text. While the issues can be quite difficult to address in a classroom, the author of the book is clear that this text does not substitute for psychological counseling.

Resilience was a powerful resource for me and my young Iraqi Yezidi students, who had survived the horrors of the Sinjar mountain massacre just two years prior and some of whom had fled their homes near Mosel. Every chapter is packed with ideas. I did not have time to complete every activity in every chapter so, as with most textbooks, I found myself selecting the most salient activities for my students at the time. I appreciated the suggested songs within each chapter and the background information on the songs and the performers.

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