



Hi. I'm Ken Jones, and this is A Classic State of Mind ... with a word about ... Latin.

WHEN I STARTED the ninth grade, my school counselor (who was very smart) said that I needed to take a foreign language. She suggested I take Latin, because many of our English words come from Latin derivatives, and if you have a good, solid base in Latin, you'll be better prepared for future study in English."

"And," she said, "I think you'll enjoy the intellectual challenge." She said, "I studied Latin for four years and I loved every moment of it. It's a beautiful language rich in nuance and color."

I didn't know anything about *nuance*, but it sounded kind of French to me.

Anyway, Mr. Drowbowski was my first Latin teacher. I would describe him as serious — about *everything*. He was a serious concert pianist, and said he 'felt his music in the key of C sharp minor. And, on our first day of Latin class, he seriously said, "Latin is not a *spoken* language. It is a written language."

Seriously? I mean, if Latin could be written, why it couldn't be spoken. And what good was it to *know* a language you couldn't speak? One of the reasons I signed up for a foreign language in the first place was so I could talk to my friends without anyone knowing what I was saying. I tuned Mr. Drowbowski out, opened my new Latin book, and flipped through its pages.

What I discovered was that Latin was *not* going to be fun. Latin was going to be ... boring.

I made it through Latin for two years. Made straight D's on my report card. Not "Improving slightly." Not "great attitude." Not "A joy to have in class." For two years, the only thing written on my report card in Latin besides the D's, was a three-word phrase: "Needs more work."

I'm not sure how I could I have missed the *nuance* and rich color in Latin. I know they must have been there. Debbie Spengler sat right in front of me for two years, and she made straight A's. She must have known nuance. She must have reveled in every rich color. But me? All I could come up with on my report card was straight D's, and ... "Needs more work." For a long time, when I thought about Latin, I didn't revel in the nuance; I wallowed in the shame of failure.

Gradually, as I grew older, though, I began to appreciate that there is a lot more to life than Latin. I did well in English and enjoyed writing. I've managed to write a few books. I earned a degree in music and even composed and published some of it.

But I never wrote any music in the key of C sharp minor; I don't hear the song of life in C sharp minor. I went on down the road of my life without looking back on my Latin experience. I didn't make a big deal of it, but I thanked God I didn't have to conjugate any more verbs when I got out of Latin.

Got anything like the shame of Latin defining your life?

Give yourself a break. Whatever it is, let it go. I may have needed to learn about ancient Rome, but I'll never enjoy wearing a toga. It's just not my style. I'm convinced it's OK not to like the key of C sharp minor. And I'm OK with not knowing much about a language you can't even speak. Of course, my life will always need more work. God made us all unique, and He *encourages* us to live lives of discipline. But, in the process, the Apostle Paul, in The Book, said the we need to keep looking and moving forward, when he said, ...

“Brothers,
one thing I do:
Forgetting what is behind and straining toward
what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win
the prize for which God has called me heavenward
in Christ Jesus.”

I'm Ken Jones, and this has been 'A Classic State of Mind.' If you'd like to download a copy of today's word, you can visit our website, "ClassicStateofMind.com" It's free. And if you'd like to contact me, my email is: kenjones@classicstateofmind.com. We'd love to hear from you, and thanks for listening.