

Dear Sensei;

Teaching school is difficult, mostly because my background knowledge is not quite adequate. Other people who teach college writing, have studied English for at least five years, while I have been a student in English for only one year. But this is unimportant - what matters is that I am doing something of value, something which involves others. Here is my question. They have asked me to give a class lecture on Buddhism and I would like to know whether you think this is advisable. I certainly know very little (beyond the superficialities) and I am not a good example of a Buddhist. Yet if people like myself do not discuss Zen, then who is going to, then who should? Most mid-Westerners (people from the central part of the United States) either think that Buddhists worship a statue and call it God, or they compare it with the intellectual booms of the Tang period and therefore study Zen as literature.

If you advise me to talk, I would start by defining "Zen" as practice, then say the the satori experience is unimportant to the beginner and impossible to explain, and return to how to sit and what happens while you sit (discussing the bits and pieces which clutter the beginner's conscious mind). On how to sit I would use Bishop Yamata's examples about Nagahara-juno and Bodhidharma and the top. If asked, I would try to explain why I sit

(Although there isn't a completely true explanation).

I would say that I cannot accept the world and myself as they appear; that I refuse (that is, wish to accept) to let the great fear (in western philosophy, the Void) keep me in obscurance; that I want to be able to accept myself, to find Myself; that I sit because I sit; that sitting is not important.

I am still doing FaZen twice a day, but I need an example, since I am a poor example to myself. Thank you again for the prayer beads, the day I left I was too embarrassed to properly express my feelings.

Respectfully,

Peter Schneider

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Kalamazoo, Michigan.

Please remember me to my friends at the temple.

Peter