

The Church's Strategy and Jesus' Teaching Principle in Shaping Responsible Character

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Abstract. *This study aims to explore church strategies in shaping the character of responsible servants and identify the teaching principles of Jesus according to the Gospel of Matthew 5-7 to be adapted in Christian Religious Education. This article uses descriptive qualitative method based on literature review. The results show that effective church strategies involve discipleship, pastoral counselling, fellowship, and Bible-based teaching. In addition, Jesus' teaching principles such as love, prayer, and obedience become the foundation of responsible character building. This study recommends integrating church strategies and Jesus' teaching principles to support the character building of church ministers and PAK students.*

Keywords Church strategy, Jesus' teaching, responsible character, Christian Religious Education

1. INTRODUCTION

The church, as a spiritual institution, has the primary responsibility in shaping the character of its ministers to reflect the values of Christ. However, one of the main challenges faced by the church today is the lack of application of Christ's character in the lives of the ministers. It is not uncommon for church servants to get caught up in personal interests, thus neglecting their main task as a representation of Christ in the midst of the congregation. Similar challenges are also found in the world of education, especially in the role of Christian Religious Education (PAK) teachers. As spiritual educators, PAK teachers bear the responsibility to instill the values of Christ to students, but many face obstacles in realising this effectively.

Jesus Christ, as the Great Teacher, has provided a teaching example that is very relevant and applicable in shaping human character. His teaching principles, as recorded in the Gospel of Matthew 5-7, offer practical guidance for churches and education to instil deep moral and spiritual values (Nainggolan, 2024). Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount, for example, teaches about love, humility, and obedience to God, which form the foundation for Christian character building.

This article aims to explore the church's strategy in shaping the character of responsible stewards, as well as explore its application in the context of education through the role of PAK teachers. By integrating church strategies and the teaching principles of Jesus, this study is expected to offer a holistic approach to the character formation of church servants and PAK

students. The main focus of this study is to provide practical recommendations that churches and PAK teachers can use in carrying out their duties as effective spiritual educators.

2. METHODS

This study used a descriptive qualitative method through literature analysis. Data were obtained from articles, journals, books, and the Bible. This approach aims to identify church strategies and Jesus' teaching principles that are relevant in the character building of church ministers and PAK students.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Church Strategies in Shaping Servant Character

Discipleship strategy is an effective approach to instil true Christian values. Although this method is not new, many pastors and servants of God neglect it, even some churches do not use it at all. Gunawan (2020) asserts that discipleship is a mechanism that is able to direct believers to grow in spiritual maturity. Chan (2014) defines discipleship as the process of someone sitting at the feet of an expert to absorb and dig into the knowledge being taught. This term was used by Jesus when He chose His disciples, as written in Matthew 28:18-20.

Jesus began His ministry with discipleship (Mark 3:13-15) and ended it by mandating the apostles to do the same (Matthew 28:18-20). Discipleship involves three important stages: first, calling people to faith in Jesus as the source of salvation; second, developing faith, values, and character to be Christ-like through living with Him; third, sending those who have been equipped to serve according to Jesus' teachings. Hull (2015) mentions that a disciple must continue to follow his or her teacher to grow in knowledge. This distinguishes discipleship from preaching, as discipleship involves an ongoing relationship.

As a practical step, churches can start by evaluating the spiritual needs of ministers and congregants to identify their strengths and weaknesses. Next, the church needs to set specific discipleship goals that match the evaluation results. The discipleship programme should include Bible-based curriculum, prayer exercises, and practical ministries that focus on Christian character building. When servants or congregants show positive changes, they can be given responsibilities that correspond to the skills they have acquired.

Church Strategy through Relationships

Relational strategies emphasise the importance of relationships between church members in supporting the discipleship process. Edison, Tafonao, T., & Waruwu, S. (2021) state that relationships in small groups can motivate and strengthen members to grow. These

relationships become the basis for reaching out to other church members, because without strong relationships, the group cannot unite to build the faith and spirituality of the congregation. Thus, relational strategies become an effective way for the church to develop the faith and spiritual life of each congregation.

Church Strategy through Pastoral Counselling

Pastoral counselling is a relevant discipleship strategy, especially for dealing with problems that congregants face. This counselling involves the help of an expert (counsellor) to the counselee to overcome the problems he or she is facing. Jesus Himself applied this approach, starting from the recruitment of disciples (Luke 5:1-11) to the counselling interaction after His resurrection (John 21:1-23). Marthen (2023) asserts that pastoral counselling is an important approach in discipleship, where Jesus showed unconditional acceptance, accompanied His disciples, and provided support in dealing with problems.

Church Strategy through Fellowship

Church fellowship is a way to build the character of Christ in the congregation. In fellowship, the congregation is directed to continue sharing the love of Christ and grow in faith. Sihombing, M. T., & Gea, I. (2023), revealed that the early church's habit of being diligent in teaching (Acts 2:42) was the key to faith growth and spiritual maturity. Through fellowship, the church can equip congregants and ministers to become responsible individuals with Christian character.

Church Strategy through Teaching

The church has the responsibility to teach the truth of God's Word to its congregants and servants. In this teaching, the pastor of the church not only provides an understanding of God's Word but also sets an example for the congregation. Jesus Himself gave teaching to His disciples, as recorded in the parable of the sower (Matthew 13:10-23). With constant teaching, the church can mould the character of the minister and the congregation to be Christ-like.

Jesus' Teaching Principles in the Gospel of Matthew 5-7

The teachings of Jesus recorded in the Gospels of Matthew 5-7 are based on moral and theological principles addressed to His disciples, as contained in the Sermon on the Mount. One controversial example is Jesus' statement of "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth". However, this phrase does not merely suggest retribution, but rather shows respect for human life. Jesus taught love, humility, and genuine giving as the path to peace. This teaching reflects the renewal brought by Jesus as the dispenser of justice based on God's righteousness. At the heart of Jesus' teaching is the Kingdom of God, which is at the centre of Christian theology.

The Kingdom of God has a close relationship with morality and ethics, which places love as the main force for exercising kindness towards others. The Kingdom of God, which is divine and transcends time, is realised through human actions in daily life. Sembiring, M. K. (2008).

Acts of Righteousness (Matthew 7:21-27)

The concluding section of Jesus' teaching in Matthew 7:21-27 highlights the importance of living in truth. Through the method of lecture and question and answer, Jesus emphasises that righteousness is manifested in the act of loving one another. The church is seen as a community that includes both saints and sinners, so practising righteousness becomes a positive response to God's Word. Setiawani, M. G. (2012)

Prayer (Matthew 6:5-8)

Prayer is a communication between man and God that creates a personal interaction. In the Bible, prayer is often represented as a means of petition, expression of gratitude, or emotional reflection. Prayer is a form of confidence that God hears the hearts and cries of His people (Psalm 34:7; Romans 8:26-27). Through prayer, man confesses his sins before God and shows his dependence on God. Sproul, R. C. (1997).

Fasting (Matthew 6:16-18)

Etymologically, the term 'fasting' refers to the act of refraining from eating, drinking, or worldly things as a form of obedience to God. In the modern Christian tradition, fasting is seen as a means of conquering the flesh and resisting worldly passions. Fasting symbolises obedience to God and a commitment to live in holiness.

Worry (Matthew 6:25-34)

According to Dien Sumiyatiningsih, worry is a form of anxiety that arises from uncertainty and a sense of helplessness. Worry can be classified into three levels: mild, moderate, and severe. Mild worry can encourage individuals to introspect, while severe worry can lead to excessive feelings and perceptions. Paulus Likilik Kristanto asserts that the response to worry reflects one's emotional and spiritual condition in facing life's challenges. Kristanto, P. L. (2006).

The Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-15)

The Lord's Prayer reflects Jesus' teaching on man's relationship with God as Father. Each part of this prayer has a deep theological meaning:

- **"Our Father in heaven"** shows God's love through Christ's sacrifice.
- **"Hallowed be your name"** implies the believers' desire to honour God in every aspect of life.

- **"Give us this day our daily bread** ' teaches dependence on God for the fulfilment of physical and spiritual needs.
- **"Forgive us our trespasses** ' emphasises the importance of forgiveness and humility in relationships with others.

Obedience to the Teachings of Christ (Matthew 7:21-29)

Obedience to Christ is a moral virtue that leads people to submit to God's will for salvation. Sproul (1997). Edkart Roy adds that Jesus' teachings were practical, addressed to His disciples and the crowds, to show that concrete actions are evidence of true obedience. Edkart (1996).

Implication for Christian Religious Education Teachers

PAK teachers are expected to live out the principle of love taught in the Bible. The Apostle Paul reminds the importance of loving one another as brothers and sisters (Ephesians 1:5). The term 'adelphos' in Greek, which means brother, is used to describe the relationship of Christians as children of God. In the context of education, love becomes the main basis for educating and building harmonious relationships with students.

Jesus' teaching principles in the Gospel of Matthew 5-7 include the teachings of love, truth, prayer, fasting, and obedience to God's will. These teachings are relevant not only in personal life, but also in building a community of faith based on love and devotion to God. PAK teachers, as educational actors, have the responsibility to live and teach these principles in the task of educating the next generation.

4. CONCLUSION

The formation of responsible servant characters requires the integration of church strategies and Jesus' teaching principles. Discipleship, pastoral counselling, fellowship, and teaching become the main strategies in the character building of church servants. The principles of love, prayer, and obedience taught by Jesus can be adapted in education to create students who have the character of Christ. This research recommends the development of a Christ-like values-based curriculum to support the spiritual and moral growth of church ministers and PAK students.

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