



## The Professional Teacher as God's Steward of Knowledge: A Biblical-Pedagogical Analysis of Matthew 25:14-30 at SDN No. 158368 Saragih 4 - Manduamas

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### ABSTRACT

*This study explores the theological and pedagogical significance of understanding the professional teacher as God's steward of knowledge, drawing from the Parable of the Talents in Matthew 25:14-30 and contextualizing its application within SDN No. 158368 Saragih 4 - Manduamas, a rural public school in Tapanuli Tengah. Using an integrated qualitative approach that combines biblical exegesis, a systematic literature review, and field-focused contextual analysis, the research examines how stewardship can serve as a guiding paradigm for enhancing teacher professionalism. The parable emphasizes entrusted responsibility, diligent effort, and accountable productivity, which parallel contemporary expectations for effective teaching-including reflective practice, ethical leadership, pedagogical skill, and a commitment to continuous learning. Findings indicate that a stewardship perspective reshapes the teacher's professional identity by framing knowledge not merely as information to be transmitted but as a divine trust to be cultivated and multiplied for the benefit of students and society. In the context of SDN Saragih 4 - Manduamas, stewardship proves especially relevant due to challenges associated with limited resources, socio-economic constraints, and diverse student needs. Teachers who embody stewardship demonstrate resilience, creativity, and community engagement, enabling them to transform constraints into opportunities for meaningful learning. The study concludes that stewardship provides a holistic framework that integrates spiritual motivation with practical competence and ethical responsibility, offering a powerful foundation for teacher development in rural educational environments. These insights invite further research into stewardship-based professional development programs to strengthen teacher capacity and foster sustainable school improvement across similar contexts.*

**Keywords:** Professional Teacher, Christian Religious Education, Teaching Model

## INTRODUCTION

Education in contemporary society increasingly demands teachers who are not only professionally competent but also morally grounded and spiritually responsible. In the Indonesian context-particularly in rural schools such as SDN No. 158368 Saragih 4 - Manduamas, Tapanuli Tengah-teachers assume a multidimensional role that extends far beyond instructional delivery. They serve as leaders, mentors, community role models, and agents of character formation. Within Christian educational philosophy, a significant theological lens for interpreting the teacher's professional identity is the concept of stewardship, as articulated in Matthew 25:14-30, the Parable of the Talents. This passage presents humans as stewards entrusted by God with resources, abilities, and opportunities that must be cultivated responsibly and returned with faithful accountability. Such a framework suggests that teaching is not merely a technical occupation but a sacred trust requiring diligence, growth, and ethical commitment (Wright, 2022). Matthew 25:14-30 depicts a master who entrusts his servants with varying amounts of *talenta*-a substantial measure of currency in the ancient Mediterranean world-and later evaluates their faithfulness upon his return. Theologically, this parable communicates God's expectation that individuals actively develop and expand what has been entrusted to them (Keener, 2014). The Greek verbs embedded in the narrative, including *prassen* ("to work" or "to engage in trade") and *kerdaino* ("to gain" or "to produce"), emphasize intentional effort, disciplined practice, and productive stewardship (France, 2007). For educators, these linguistic insights highlight that professional competence is dynamic rather than static; it must be nurtured continually through creativity, reflective practice, and responsible management of teaching gifts. In this sense, teachers are called to imitate the faithful servants who labor diligently, cultivate their entrusted abilities, and yield meaningful results that contribute to the growth of their students and communities. Within contemporary educational discourse, stewardship aligns strongly with modern conceptions of teacher professionalism. Scholars assert that professional educators must possess mastery of content, pedagogical expertise, moral integrity, reflective capacity, and an ongoing commitment to improve their practice (Darling-Hammond, 2017). These qualities parallel the biblical idea that entrusted talents must be developed and used for the good of learners and society. In rural schools such as SDN No. 158368 Saragih 4 - Manduamas, the need for such stewardship becomes particularly urgent. Limited resources, socio-economic constraints, and diverse learner readiness require teachers who are resilient and innovative-individuals who view their responsibilities not as routine tasks but as purposeful acts of service (Suyanto, 2020). The educational context of SDN No. 158368 Saragih 4 - Manduamas further underscores the relevance of this theological paradigm. Located in a remote area of Tapanuli Tengah, the school serves students who frequently face economic hardship, limited access to learning materials, and reduced exposure to broader educational opportunities. In such environments, teachers must function as stewards who maximize limited resources, innovate within constraints, and nurture student potential with dedication and care (Simanjuntak, 2021). Their work parallels the faithful servants in Matthew 25:14-30 who generate meaningful outcomes despite the limitations of their circumstances. The parable's emphasis on accountability highlights the ethical dimensions of teaching. Teachers are accountable not only to educational authorities but also to parents,

communities, and ultimately to God for fostering students' intellectual, moral, and spiritual growth (Groome, 2019). The negligent servant-who hides his talent out of fear-symbolizes the dangers of complacency, stagnation, and professional irresponsibility. This narrative serves as a caution for educators, reminding them that failure to develop their competencies or neglecting their pedagogical duties constitutes a breach of stewardship. Scholarly dialogue integrating theology and pedagogy remains limited, especially within the Indonesian Christian Religious Education (CRE) context. Much of the literature emphasizes psychological or sociological dimensions of teacher competence without examining the theological foundations that could enrich professional identity (Nainggolan, 2021). This study seeks to fill that gap by interpreting Matthew 25:14-30 as a theological paradigm for developing teacher professionalism and by contextualizing its insights within the educational realities of SDN No. 158368 Saragih 4 - Manduamas. This research aims to: analyze the exegetical meaning of stewardship in Matthew 25:14-30, examine how this theological framework can inform professional teaching practice, and contextualize these insights within the pedagogical challenges and opportunities of SDN No. 158368 Saragih 4 - Manduamas. Through this integration, the study intends to demonstrate how teachers can embody their vocation as God's stewards of knowledge, contributing faithfully and effectively to the holistic development of their students.

## METHODS

This study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) design to explore the theological and pedagogical implications of Matthew 25:14-30 for teacher professionalism, with contextual application to SDN No. 158368 Saragih 4 - Manduamas. The SLR approach was chosen because it offers a rigorous and transparent method for synthesizing existing research, allowing biblical interpretation, educational theory, and contextual analysis to be examined in an integrated manner (Snyder, 2019). The research followed three major phases-planning, conducting, and reporting-adapted from established SLR frameworks widely used in educational and theological scholarship (Booth, 2016). During the planning phase, the research question was defined around the central theme of stewardship in Matthew 25:14-30 and its relevance for professional teaching practice. A review protocol was prepared to guide database selection, search strategies, inclusion and exclusion criteria, and data synthesis procedures. To ensure theological depth and educational relevance, the study focused on sources related to biblical exegesis, teacher professionalism, Christian education, rural schooling, and stewardship ethics (Wright, 2022). In the conducting phase, systematic searches were carried out across major academic databases, including Religion Database and ERIC. Keyword combinations included "stewardship," "Matthew 25:14-30," "teacher professionalism," "Christian education," "rural schooling," and "educational stewardship." The timeframe for publication selection spanned the years 2000-2024 to capture both foundational and contemporary scholarship. Inclusion criteria required that sources provided exegetical interpretation of Matthew 25:14-30, discussed concepts of stewardship or moral responsibility, explored teacher professionalism or pedagogical competence, or offered analysis relevant to rural educational contexts such as those found in Indonesia (Groome, 2019). Exclusion criteria removed materials that were purely devotional, lacked academic grounding, or did not address the intersection of theology

and education. From an initial pool of 156 sources, 68 met preliminary criteria, and after full-text screening, 34 were selected for final analysis. Each text was analyzed using thematic coding, enabling the identification of recurring concepts such as biblical stewardship, accountability, pedagogical responsibility, reflective practice, rural educational challenges, and teacher competence (Saldaña, 2021). Particular emphasis was placed on exegetical works to ensure that the interpretation of Matthew 25:14–30 was grounded in credible biblical scholarship, including linguistic, socio-historical, and theological insights (Keener, 2014; France, 2007). Educational sources were examined for themes related to professionalism, pedagogical stewardship, teacher expectations, and the moral dimensions of teaching (Darling-Hammond, 2017). A matrix comparison technique was used to align theological findings with educational theory, generating an integrated framework suitable for contextual application. The insights drawn from the literature were then contextualized to the realities of SDN No. 158368 Saragih 4 - Manduamas, employing a contextual theology approach that interprets biblical principles in light of local socio-cultural and educational environments (Nainggolan, 2021). This step ensured that the final synthesis reflects not only conceptual alignment but also practical relevance to the challenges faced by teachers in rural Indonesian schools, especially regarding resource limitations, learner diversity, and the need for moral leadership. In the reporting phase, the findings were organized into an analytical synthesis connecting biblical stewardship with teacher professionalism and contextual application. The SLR process was documented transparently to ensure replicability and scholarly accountability. Through this method, the study offers a robust and credible foundation for understanding teachers as God’s stewards of knowledge within the context of Matthew 25:14-30 and the lived realities of SDN No. 158368 Saragih 4 - Manduamas.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study, grounded in a comprehensive Systematic Literature Review (SLR) and contextualized within the unique realities of SDN No. 158368 Saragih 4 - Manduamas, highlight that the concept of the “professional teacher as God’s steward of knowledge,” derived from Matthew 25:14-30, provides a theologically rich, pedagogically constructive, and contextually relevant framework for strengthening teacher professionalism in Indonesian rural school settings. The synthesis of biblical exegesis, educational theory, and contextual realities reveals four major thematic insights: stewardship as a theological paradigm for professional identity, competence, accountability, and continuous improvement as essential characteristics of the faithful steward, the pedagogical implications of stewardship for teaching, learning, and community engagement, and the contextual challenges and opportunities that shape teacher stewardship in rural schools such as Saragih 4 - Manduamas. Taken together, these themes demonstrate how Matthew 25:14-30 offers not merely a spiritual metaphor but a robust professional ethic for teachers who must navigate limited resources, diverse student needs, and increasing educational demands. First, the SLR reveals that the concept of stewardship presented in Matthew 25:14-30 aligns strongly with modern understandings of professional identity. The parable portrays the master entrusting resources to servants-talents that must be developed, multiplied, and returned with faithful accountability. Scholars emphasize that the verbs *prassen* (“to work diligently”) and *kerdaino* (“to gain or produce”) reflect intentional effort, creativity, and productive

engagement (Keener, 2014). These linguistic insights support the interpretation that stewardship requires active responsibility rather than passive preservation. In educational settings, this means that teachers are not merely conveyors of predetermined content but are entrusted with shaping knowledge, nurturing student potential, and creating transformative learning experiences. This resonates with professional teaching standards, which describe teachers as reflective practitioners committed to pedagogical excellence, ethical conduct, and ongoing professional learning (Darling-Hammond, 2017). In this sense, the teacher becomes a steward who must multiply their “talents”—knowledge, creativity, pedagogical skill—for the flourishing of students, the community, and the educational system. A second major theme concerns the essential characteristics of stewardship: competence, accountability, and continuous growth. The faithful servants in the parable embody diligence, initiative, and responsible decision-making—qualities strongly associated with professional teaching. Research consistently shows that teacher competence, particularly in rural and under-resourced schools, is a decisive factor in student achievement and overall school effectiveness (Hattie, 2012). Competence in teaching includes mastery of subject matter, pedagogical skill, assessment literacy, interpersonal sensitivity, and the ability to adapt instruction to student needs (Shulman, 1987). The parable's emphasis on accountability further strengthens this connection. Teachers, like the servants in the story, will be “called to account” for their stewardship: not only through formal evaluations by school leadership but through the outcomes seen in student learning, character development, and community well-being. This aligns with the theory of ethical professionalism, which argues that teachers must recognize the moral weight of their vocation and respond with integrity, diligence, and a commitment to justice in education (Sockett, 2011). The SLR findings confirm that stewardship is not merely a spiritual principle but a model of professional excellence that requires educators to cultivate their gifts continuously, avoid stagnation, and resist the fear-driven tendencies symbolized by the servant who buried his talent—a figure representing professional complacency, avoidance of responsibility, and failure to grow (Wright, 2012). A third theme emerging from the findings involves the pedagogical implications of stewardship, particularly how teachers can embody stewardship in instructional practice, classroom relationships, and school culture. Stewardship requires that teachers view knowledge not as private intellectual property but as a gift to be shared generously and responsibly for the benefit of students. This echoes Paulo Freire's view that education is a relational and ethical process that requires teachers to empower learners through dialogical and transformative pedagogy (Freire, 2005). Teachers who see themselves as stewards create classrooms where students' abilities are nurtured and their potential is multiplied. The literature highlights several key pedagogical practices that align with stewardship: differentiated instruction to meet diverse learning needs (Tomlinson, 2014), formative assessment as a tool for growth (Black & Wiliam, 2009), student-centered learning that develops agency and critical thinking (Bransford, 2000), and culturally responsive teaching that honors students' backgrounds (Gay, 2018). The faithful steward-teacher recognizes that each student is also a “talent” entrusted to them—full of potential, requiring careful cultivation, encouragement, and opportunities to grow. Within rural Indonesian settings such as Manduamas, where students may face limitations in exposure, resources, and support, stewardship-oriented pedagogy becomes essential for bridging learning gaps and fostering confidence and capability. The SLR findings show that

stewardship influences classroom climate and teacher–student relationships. A steward-teacher models fairness, patience, compassion, and responsibility—qualities that reflect the character of a faithful servant. Socio-emotional learning research demonstrates that positive teacher–student relationships significantly affect student motivation, resilience, and academic success (Anderson, 2001). Stewardship thus shapes not only what teachers do but who they become: individuals who lead with integrity, serve with humility, and foster communities characterized by trust and mutual respect. In rural contexts, where teachers often function as extended family figures or community leaders, this relational dimension of stewardship is particularly important. Teachers who embody stewardship become role models whose diligence, ethical behavior, and care for students influence not only classroom learning but the moral fabric of the community (Campbell, 2003). The fourth major theme pertains to contextual elements influencing stewardship at SDN No. 158368 Saragih 4 - Manduamas. The school’s rural location presents both challenges and opportunities that shape teachers’ ability to embody stewardship. Many students come from families experiencing economic hardship, limited educational exposure, or agricultural labor demands that affect attendance and readiness to learn. Teachers often face shortages of learning materials, limited professional development opportunities, and infrastructural constraints. Research in rural education emphasizes that such contexts require teachers who are adaptable, innovative, and community-engaged (Azano & Stewart, 2016). Within this environment, stewardship becomes a practical necessity: teachers must maximize limited resources, improvise instructional materials, collaborate with parents and community members, and design creative strategies for student engagement. The SLR findings affirm that stewardship empowers teachers to transform constraints into opportunities by modeling resilience, resourcefulness, and hope—qualities essential for rural educational success (Barley & Beesley, 2007). Moreover, stewardship encourages teachers to advocate for equitable educational resources and policies, positioning them not only as classroom practitioners but as agents of justice and community transformation. The integration of biblical stewardship with contemporary educational theory also reveals a deeper dimension of teacher motivation. Several studies highlight that values-based professional identity sustains teacher commitment, especially in challenging environments (Day, 2017). For Christian teachers, stewardship offers a spiritual rationale for excellence: teaching becomes not merely a job but a sacred mandate to multiply God-given abilities for the flourishing of children. This spiritual foundation can enhance intrinsic motivation, job satisfaction, and resilience—factors crucial for teacher retention in rural schools (Hong, 2012). In the context of Saragih 4 - Manduamas, where teachers may grapple with professional fatigue or limited institutional support, stewardship provides a sustaining vision of purpose rooted in faith and service.

The SLR findings highlight potential barriers to effective stewardship, including fear of failure, lack of confidence, insufficient training, and systemic constraints. These challenges parallel the behavior of the fearful servant in the parable, who buried his talent due to anxiety and perceived inadequacy. Educational psychology literature confirms that teacher efficacy significantly affects instructional quality and student outcomes (Bandura, 1997). Thus, a stewardship framework must be accompanied by institutional support: professional development, mentoring, collaboration opportunities, and leadership

practices that encourage risk-taking, reflection, and innovation. School leaders play a crucial role in shaping an environment where stewardship flourishes—one that values growth, recognizes effort, and affirms teachers' contributions (Leithwood, 2010). Strengthening this supportive ecosystem is essential for enabling teachers at Saragih 4 - Manduamas to fulfill their role as faithful stewards of knowledge. The findings demonstrate that the parable of Matthew 25:14–30 offers an integrated model for teacher professionalism that combines theological conviction, moral responsibility, pedagogical excellence, and contextual relevance. Stewardship becomes both a spiritual identity and a professional ethic: teachers are entrusted with the sacred responsibility of nurturing minds, hearts, and futures. For SDN No. 158368 Saragih 4 - Manduamas, this framework provides a powerful vision for educational transformation—one in which teachers multiply what they have been given, cultivate student potential despite limitations, and embody faithfulness in service to God, community, and the next generation.

## CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the concept of the professional teacher as God's steward of knowledge, derived from Matthew 25:14–30, provides a theologically grounded and pedagogically robust framework for strengthening teacher professionalism within the context of SDN No. 158368 Saragih 4 - Manduamas. By synthesizing biblical exegesis, educational theory, and empirical realities of rural schooling, the research confirms that stewardship is not merely a spiritual metaphor but a comprehensive professional ethic that guides teachers toward competence, accountability, and continuous improvement. The parable's message of entrusted responsibility, faithful diligence, and productive growth aligns closely with contemporary understandings of effective teaching, which emphasize reflective practice, instructional quality, ethical leadership, and student-centered engagement. Such alignment indicates that stewardship can function as an integrative paradigm that strengthens teacher identity and motivates transformative practice. The findings further reveal that stewardship has significant pedagogical implications. Teachers who see themselves as stewards perceive knowledge as a gift to be multiplied, not merely transmitted. This perspective encourages instructional creativity, differentiation, formative assessment, collaborative learning, and culturally responsive pedagogy—practices that are essential for addressing the diverse needs of students in rural communities. Stewardship also shapes classroom climate, fostering relationships grounded in care, fairness, responsibility, and mutual respect. These relational dimensions are particularly essential in Manduamas, where teachers often serve as community role models and sources of stability for students navigating social and economic challenges. Contextual analysis at SDN Saragih 4 - Manduamas demonstrates that stewardship is especially relevant in environments marked by limited resources and structural constraints. Teachers in such settings must be resourceful, adaptive, and community-engaged—qualities that correspond directly to the biblical portrayal of the faithful servant. By embracing stewardship, teachers can transform limitations into opportunities for innovation, strengthen collaboration with parents and local leaders, and advocate for educational equity. Moreover, stewardship provides a sustaining sense of purpose and resilience, enabling teachers to persevere amid professional fatigue or

systemic obstacles. The spiritual foundation of stewardship enriches intrinsic motivation, reinforcing teaching as a vocation of service grounded in faith and moral responsibility. The study also acknowledges that effective stewardship requires institutional support. Teachers cannot flourish in their stewardship role if constrained by inadequate professional development, inconsistent leadership, or a school culture that discourages creativity and risk-taking. Thus, school leaders and policymakers must cultivate an environment that promotes reflection, collaboration, and pedagogical growth. Empowering teachers through mentoring, recognition, and shared decision-making is essential for ensuring that stewardship becomes a lived reality rather than an aspirational ideal. The concept of the teacher as God's steward of knowledge offers a compelling and contextually relevant paradigm for enhancing teacher professionalism at SDN No. 158368 Saragih 4 - Manduamas. This stewardship framework integrates spiritual conviction with practical competence, moral responsibility with pedagogical excellence, and personal identity with communal engagement. By embodying stewardship, teachers participate in a transformative mission: to multiply the knowledge, skills, and potentials entrusted to them for the flourishing of students, the strengthening of the community, and the faithful fulfillment of their calling. Future research may explore how stewardship-based professional development programs can be implemented across rural Indonesian schools to deepen teacher capacity, strengthen school culture, and promote equitable educational outcomes.

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