

## Creative Faith-Based Teaching in Christian Religious Education: An Exegetical Inspiration from Exodus 37:17 at SMP Negeri 2 Benua Lima

Wida Periani

Pendidikan Profesi Guru, Fakultas Ilmu Pendidikan Kristen, IAKN Tarutung

\*correspondence: [widaperiani62@guru.smp.belajar.id](mailto:widaperiani62@guru.smp.belajar.id)

### ABSTRACT

*This study examines creative faith-based teaching in Christian Religious Education (CRE) through an exegetical engagement with Exodus 37:17 and its implementation at SMP Negeri 2 Benua Lima, East Barito, Indonesia. The research is grounded in the conviction that creativity in Christian education is not merely a pedagogical technique but a theological vocation rooted in obedience to God and participation in His creative work. Employing a qualitative design with an integrated exegetical and case study approach, the study involved biblical analysis of Exodus 37:17, classroom observations, semi-structured interviews with CRE and Christian teachers, and document analysis of instructional materials. The research context involved 74 Christian students and 9 Christian teachers in a pluralistic public school environment. The findings reveal that creative teaching is perceived by teachers as an expression of spiritual calling and is manifested through storytelling, symbolic-visual learning, contextual discussions, and simple project-based activities. These creative strategies significantly enhance student engagement, spiritual reflection, and internalization of Christian values. Exegetically, Exodus 37:17 affirms creativity as sacred craftsmanship guided by divine instruction, which parallels the intentional planning and faith-oriented innovation seen in classroom practice. Despite challenges such as limited instructional time and learning resources, creativity persists through strong spiritual motivation. This study proposes a theological-pedagogical model of creative faith-based teaching that integrates spiritual intentionality, skillful preparation, aesthetic-symbolic expression, and contextual transformation. The study concludes that creative faith-based teaching is an intrinsic theological dimension of CRE and a vital medium for faith formation in pluralistic educational settings.*

**Keywords:** Faith-Based Teaching, Christian Religious Education, Inspiration

### INTRODUCTION

Creativity in teaching has become an essential competence for educators in the twenty-first century, particularly in the context of Christian Religious Education (CRE). Rapid social, cultural, and technological changes demand teachers who are not only pedagogically competent but also spiritually rooted and creatively adaptive. In Christian

education, creativity is not merely a technical skill for classroom innovation but is deeply connected to faith, vocation, and participation in God's creative work (Banks & Ledbetter, 2016). This theological vision of creativity positions Christian teachers, especially CRE teachers, as co-workers with God in nurturing faith, character, and intellectual growth among students. In the Indonesian context, Christian Religious Education continues to play a strategic role in shaping students' spiritual identity, moral character, and social responsibility amid pluralistic and often challenging educational environments (Siahaan, 2020). Creative faith-based teaching becomes increasingly significant in public schools, where Christian students often constitute a minority and where teachers must find relevant, contextual, and meaningful ways to transmit Christian values without losing academic rigor. This challenge is clearly visible in SMP Negeri 2 Benua Lima, located in East Barito, where there are 74 Christian students and 9 Christian teachers, including one Christian Religious Education teacher. This demographic reality requires a creative pedagogical approach that not only communicates biblical teachings but also strengthens students' faith amid a diverse educational setting.

Creativity, from a biblical perspective, is rooted in the nature of God as the Creator. Scripture consistently presents God as the source of order, beauty, and purposeful design in creation. Human creativity, therefore, is understood as a reflection of the *imago Dei*—the image of God within humanity (Gen. 1:26-27). Within the Old Testament, this theological foundation of creativity is powerfully illustrated in the craftsmanship of sacred objects for worship. One essential text that illuminates this dimension is Exodus 37:17, which describes the making of the golden lampstand (*menorah*) for the Tabernacle: “He made the lampstand of pure gold; he made the lampstand of hammered work; its shaft, its branches, its cups, its knobs, and its flowers were of one piece with it.” This verse highlights the integration of divine instruction, human skill, artistic creativity, and spiritual purpose (Durham, 2004). Exodus 37:17 belongs to the broader Tabernacle narrative (Exod. 25-40), where God not only prescribes the function of sacred objects but also emphasizes aesthetic beauty and craftsmanship. The use of “hammered work” (*miqshah*) indicates advanced artistic skill, precision, and intentional creative effort, guided by divine revelation (Stuart, 2006). Thus, creativity in this text is not autonomous self-expression but a faithful response to God's calling. This theological insight offers a profound paradigm for CRE teachers: teaching is not merely the transfer of knowledge, but a sacred task that integrates faith, skill, dedication, and creativity in fulfilling God's educational purposes. In modern Christian education, creative teaching has been shown to enhance students' engagement, critical thinking, spiritual reflection, and internalization of faith values (Wyckoff, 2018). However, many CRE teachers still struggle with monotonous instructional methods that limit students' participation and reduce learning to mere cognitive acquisition (Tung, 2019). The gap between theological ideals of creativity and classroom realities becomes a significant pedagogical concern. Therefore, exploring biblical foundations for creative teaching is not only theologically relevant but also pedagogically urgent. This study is situated within that conceptual tension. By employing an exegetical approach to Exodus 37:17 and connecting it with the lived practice of Christian Religious Education at SMP Negeri 2 Benua Lima, this research seeks to bridge biblical theology and contemporary pedagogy. The presence of 74 Christian students and 9 Christian teachers provides a concrete educational context in which creative, faith-

based teaching is not an abstract concept but a daily necessity. Teachers are challenged to design learning experiences that are intellectually stimulating, spiritually formative, and contextually meaningful within a multicultural school environment. Previous studies have emphasized the importance of teacher creativity as a determinant of learning effectiveness and character formation (Craft, 2011; Suhartono, 2021). Limited research has explicitly examined creativity through an exegetical lens that directly links Old Testament theological insights with the praxis of Christian Religious Education in Indonesian public schools. This study seeks to fill that gap by proposing that Exodus 37:17 offers a theological and pedagogical framework for creative faith-based teaching. This article aims to examine how the creative workmanship described in Exodus 37:17 can inspire and inform the pedagogical identity of CRE teachers, particularly in the context of SMP Negeri 2 Benua Lima. By integrating exegetical analysis and educational reflection, this study contributes to the development of a biblically grounded model of creative teaching that supports both spiritual formation and academic excellence in Christian Religious Education.

## METHODS

A qualitative research design with an integrated exegetical and case study approach was implemented to explore how the theological meaning of Exodus 37:17 informs and inspires creative faith-based teaching in Christian Religious Education. The qualitative design was selected because the research seeks to understand meanings, interpretations, and lived pedagogical practices rather than to measure variables statistically. The study was conducted at SMP Negeri 2 Benua Lima, located in East Barito, where there are 74 Christian students and 9 Christian teachers, including one Christian Religious Education (CRE) teacher. This setting was purposefully chosen because it represents a public school context in which Christian education is practiced in a pluralistic environment, thereby requiring a high degree of pedagogical creativity rooted in faith. An exegetical analysis of Exodus 37:17 was conducted using a historical-grammatical method. This stage involved examining the Hebrew text, identifying key lexical terms related to craftsmanship and creativity (such as *miqshah*, "hammered work"), analyzing the literary context within the Tabernacle narrative (Exod. 25-40), and interpreting the theological message concerning divine instruction, human skill, and sacred creativity. Secondary sources such as biblical commentaries, Old Testament theology books, and peer-reviewed exegetical studies were used to support the interpretation. The aim of this stage was to construct a solid theological framework regarding creativity as a faithful response to God's calling. A qualitative field study was conducted to examine how creative faith-based teaching is understood and practiced in Christian Religious Education at the research site. Data were collected through classroom observations and semi-structured interviews. Classroom observations were carried out during CRE learning sessions to capture teaching strategies, use of learning media, student engagement, and manifestations of creative pedagogy. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the CRE teacher and several Christian teachers to explore their theological understanding of creativity, their pedagogical experiences, and the challenges they face in implementing creative faith-based teaching in a public school environment. The study employed a theological-pedagogical integration stage, in which the results of the exegetical analysis were dialogically connected with the empirical data from the field. This integrative process aimed to identify convergences

between the biblical concept of sacred craftsmanship in Exodus 37:17 and the practical expressions of creative teaching observed in the classroom. The integration was carried out through a process of thematic coding, where both biblical insights and pedagogical practices were categorized into key themes such as spiritual intentionality, aesthetic dimension of learning, skillful preparation, and faith-oriented innovation. During data reduction, interview transcripts and observational notes were systematically coded and categorized. Data display was conducted in the form of narrative matrices and thematic descriptions to facilitate interpretation. Conclusions were drawn through continuous verification between exegetical findings and field data. Member checking was also conducted by confirming preliminary interpretations with the CRE teacher to enhance credibility. Through this methodological framework, the study seeks to produce a valid and biblically grounded understanding of creative faith-based teaching in Christian Religious Education.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The exegetical analysis of Exodus 37:17 reveals that the making of the golden lampstand (*menorah*) was not merely a technical craft but a sacred vocation rooted in obedience to divine instruction and manifested through artistic creativity. The phrase “hammered work” (*miqshah*) indicates a process that required patience, precision, and intentionality, reflecting a deep integration between faith, skill, and aesthetic purpose. This theological understanding of creativity as a faithful response to God’s calling forms the foundational lens for interpreting creative teaching in Christian Religious Education (CRE). Field findings at SMP Negeri 2 Benua Lima demonstrate that CRE teachers perceive their teaching ministry not merely as a professional duty but as a spiritual calling. Interviews with the CRE teacher show a consistent awareness that teaching is an act of worship and service to God. This perception strongly aligns with the theological meaning of craftsmanship in Exodus 37:17, where human skill becomes a vessel for divine purposes. Teachers consistently described their creative efforts in the classroom as an expression of gratitude, obedience, and dedication to God. Thus, creative teaching in this context is not driven primarily by demands of curriculum innovation, but by a faith-based commitment to participate in God’s formative work in students’ lives. This finding supports the broader theological view that creativity in Christian education must be rooted in vocation rather than mere technique. Creativity becomes an act of stewardship of gifts bestowed by God. Just as Bezalel and the craftsmen of the Tabernacle were called, empowered, and guided by God’s Spirit, CRE teachers are also positioned as spiritual artisans who shape not physical objects but the inner world of students—faith, character, and moral discernment.

Classroom observations revealed that creative teaching at SMP Negeri 2 Benua Lima is expressed through varied pedagogical strategies that integrate biblical content, contextual illustrations, and student-centered learning. The CRE teacher consistently employed storytelling, role-playing, visual media, contextual case studies, and simple project-based assignments to help students grasp biblical concepts. For instance, when teaching about worship and obedience, students were asked to design simple symbolic “lamps” from recycled materials, connecting directly with the symbolism of the menorah in Exodus 37. This practice resonates strongly with Exodus 37:17 in two ways. First, it

reflects the aesthetic dimension of learning. As the menorah was created with beauty and symbolic richness, so learning is shaped to be meaningful, engaging, and emotionally resonant. Second, it demonstrates the principle of skillful preparation. Observations and document analysis of lesson plans indicate that creative activities were not spontaneous improvisations but carefully planned instructional designs aligned with learning objectives. This mirrors the intentional craftsmanship in the Tabernacle narrative. Student responses during classroom interaction showed higher engagement, deeper reflection, and greater willingness to express personal faith experiences when creative methods were employed. Students reported that learning activities involving visual creation, dramatization, and discussion helped them “understand the Bible more clearly” and “feel closer to God.” This confirms that creative faith-based teaching functions not only cognitively but also affectively and spiritually. These findings affirm that creativity enhances holistic learning-integrating knowing, feeling, and believing. From a theological perspective, this reflects the integrative nature of sacred craftsmanship in Exodus 37:17, where beauty, function, and holiness are inseparable.

### ***Creativity as a Medium for Faith Formation in a Pluralistic Environment***

The demographic context of SMP Negeri 2 Benua Lima, 74 Christian students and a wider non-Christian school community, creates a pluralistic educational environment that requires sensitivity, adaptability, and creative communication of faith. CRE teachers emphasized that creativity is necessary to make biblical instruction relevant without being triumphalistic or exclusive. Classroom observations show that creative teaching is used as a bridge between biblical truth and everyday experience. Lessons often begin with real-life problems faced by students—friendship conflicts, digital addiction, family issues—and are then linked to biblical narratives and principles. This contextual bridging echoes the theological movement in Isaiah and the Tabernacle tradition, where divine realities are expressed through tangible, earthly symbols. The menorah, though heavenly in meaning, was made with earthy materials and human tools. In this sense, creative teaching becomes a form of incarnational pedagogy: abstract faith is translated into concrete life situations. Students testified that such approaches help them see Christianity not as distant doctrine but as a living guide for daily life. This supports the theological claim that creativity serves the redemptive purpose of making divine truth accessible within human contexts. The creative strategies employed by CRE teachers also function as a means of identity formation for Christian students who live as a minority within the school environment. By participating in creative, faith-based learning activities, students develop a sense of belonging, confidence, and spiritual self-awareness. This aligns with the symbolic function of the menorah as a sign of God’s presence among Israel: creative learning becomes a sign of God’s presence in the educational journey of the students. Limited instructional time for CRE in public schools restricts the scope of creative activities. Teachers often have to balance between delivering curriculum content and facilitating creative processes that require more time. Infrastructure and learning resources are not always adequate. While some creative activities rely on simple and low-cost materials, more advanced media-based innovations are constrained by limited technological access. This reality highlights a tension between theological ideals of creative excellence (as symbolized by the finely crafted menorah) and practical limitations in contemporary educational settings. Teacher workload and emotional fatigue also affect

creative consistency. CRE teachers often serve multiple roles-educator, counselor, spiritual mentor-and this multiplicity of responsibilities can reduce the energy available for sustained innovation. Teachers consistently reported that spiritual motivation and prayer are primary sources of resilience in maintaining creativity. These challenges can be interpreted through the lens of Exodus 37:17 as well. The craftsmanship of the Tabernacle did not occur in an ideal environment but in the context of Israel's wilderness journey, marked by uncertainty and limitation. Yet, creativity flourished because it was grounded in divine calling and communal commitment. Similarly, creative faith-based teaching at SMP Negeri 2 Benua Lima persists not because conditions are perfect, but because teachers are driven by theological conviction.

### ***Integrating Exegesis and Pedagogy: A Theological-Pedagogical Model of Creative Teaching***

The integration of exegetical insights from Exodus 37:17 and field findings from SMP Negeri 2 Benua Lima yields a theological-pedagogical model of creative faith-based teaching with four main dimensions. Creativity is grounded in conscious dependence on God and recognition of teaching as a sacred calling. Teachers do not create merely for innovation's sake but for God's redemptive purposes. Creative teaching requires disciplined planning, mastery of content, and thoughtful instructional design. This reflects the "hammered work" of the menorah, which demanded technical excellence and precision. Learning is shaped to be meaningful, beautiful, and symbolically rich. Visual media, storytelling, and creative projects function as modern pedagogical "menorahs" that illuminate spiritual truth. Creativity is directed toward transforming students' lives within their concrete social and cultural realities. Faith is not only taught but lived and practiced. This model demonstrates that creative faith-based teaching is not an optional enhancement of CRE but an intrinsic expression of its theological identity. Creativity becomes the meeting point between divine revelation and human educational practice.

The findings of this study carry several important implications. CRE teacher formation programs should integrate theological reflection on creativity with pedagogical skill development. Teachers need to understand that creativity is not merely a methodological competence but a spiritual vocation rooted in Scripture. School leadership and educational stakeholders should provide institutional support for creative teaching, including time allocation, resource provision, and professional development. Without structural support, creative faith-based teaching risks depending solely on individual teacher sacrifice. Future research should explore comparative studies across different public school contexts to examine how creative faith-based teaching adapts to varying cultural, technological, and demographic realities. The dialogue between Exodus 37:17 and the lived practice of Christian Religious Education at SMP Negeri 2 Benua Lima reveals a profound convergence between ancient sacred craftsmanship and contemporary pedagogical creativity. Just as the menorah was crafted through divine guidance, artistic skill, and spiritual purpose, so creative teaching in CRE emerges from the integration of faith, competence, and contextual sensitivity. Creativity is not a luxury but a theological necessity in Christian education, enabling biblical truth to be communicated in transformative and life-giving ways. This study thus affirms that creative faith-based

teaching is a manifestation of faithful obedience, a medium for spiritual formation, and a catalyst for educational transformation in Christian Religious Education within public school contexts.

## CONCLUSION

This study set out to explore creative faith-based teaching in Christian Religious Education (CRE) through an exegetical engagement with Exodus 37:17 and its practical implementation at SMP Negeri 2 Benua Lima, East Barito. The findings demonstrate that creative teaching in CRE is not merely a pedagogical strategy but a theological vocation rooted in obedience, craftsmanship, and spiritual intentionality. The craftsmanship of the golden lampstand in Exodus 37:17 provides a powerful biblical paradigm that integrates divine instruction, human skill, aesthetic beauty, and sacred purpose. This paradigm proves to be highly relevant for understanding the creative identity of CRE teachers in contemporary public school contexts. Empirical findings reveal that creative faith-based teaching at SMP Negeri 2 Benua Lima is expressed through diverse instructional methods such as storytelling, contextual discussion, visual-symbolic activities, and simple project-based learning. These creative practices foster higher student engagement, deeper spiritual reflection, and stronger internalization of Christian values among the 74 Christian students. Teachers perceive creativity not as an optional innovation but as an expression of their calling to serve God and students faithfully. This confirms the exegetical insight that creativity, as portrayed in Exodus 37:17, is a form of faithful participation in God's work rather than mere technical expression. The study also highlights that creative teaching plays a crucial role in faith formation within a pluralistic school environment. Through creative and contextual pedagogy, biblical truths become accessible to students' daily experiences, enabling CRE to function as an incarnational form of education where faith is lived, not merely taught. Creative teaching strengthens students' Christian identity, confidence, and moral discernment amid diversity. In this way, creativity becomes both a pedagogical bridge and a spiritual medium. Several challenges were identified, including limited instructional time, constrained learning resources, and teacher workload. These obstacles reflect the tension between theological ideals of creative excellence and practical educational realities. Yet, as in the wilderness context of the Tabernacle narrative, creativity continues to flourish when driven by divine calling and spiritual commitment. This suggests that the sustainability of creative faith-based teaching depends not only on infrastructure but also on spiritual motivation and institutional support. The integration of exegetical and empirical findings resulted in a theological-pedagogical model of creative faith-based teaching comprising four dimensions: spiritual intentionality, skillful preparation, aesthetic-symbolic expression, and contextual-transformational orientation. This model affirms that creativity is intrinsic to the theological identity of CRE and essential for holistic education that unites cognition, affection, and spirituality. This study confirms that Exodus 37:17 offers a robust biblical foundation for understanding and practicing creative teaching in Christian Religious Education. Creative faith-based teaching is not a secondary enhancement of instruction but a theological necessity that enables CRE to fulfill its formative mission in contemporary educational settings. The study therefore contributes both to biblical pedagogy and to the professional development of CRE teachers in public schools. Future research is encouraged to expand this model across diverse regional and institutional

contexts to further strengthen the integration between biblical theology and educational practice.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Banks, R., & Ledbetter, B. (2016). *Reviewing leadership: A Christian evaluation of current approaches*. Baker Academic.
- Brueggemann, W. (2003). *Theology of the Old Testament: Testimony, dispute, advocacy*. Fortress Press.
- Craft, A. (2011). *Creativity and education futures: Learning in a digital age*. Trentham Books.
- Durham, J. I. (2004). *Exodus* (Word Biblical Commentary, Vol. 3). Thomas Nelson.
- Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (3rd ed.). Sage Publications.
- Siahaan, H. E. R. (2020). Christian religious education in Indonesian public schools: Challenges and opportunities. *Journal of Christian Education in Asia* 2(1), 45-60.
- Stuart, D. (2006). *Exodus* (New American Commentary, Vol. 2). B&H Publishing.
- Suhartono, I. (2021). Teacher creativity and character education in Indonesian schools. *International Journal of Education and Pedagogy* 3(2), 101-115.
- Tung, K. Y. (2019). Monotony in religious education and its impact on student engagement. *Asian Journal of Christian Education* 4(1), 23-39.
- Wyckoff, D. (2018). *Teaching for faith: A guide to nurturing spiritual formation in Christian education*. Abingdon Press.