

## Christian Religious Education Teachers as Models of Faith in the Divine Calling: A Reflection on Genesis 28:16-17 at SDN 2 Karya Bhakti

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### ABSTRACT

*This study explores how Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers at SDN 2 Karya Bhakti embody their role as models of faith in the light of Genesis 28:16-17, a passage that depicts Jacob's awakening to the presence of God and his resulting transformation. With a context involving 16 Christian students and 8 Christian teachers, including the CRE teacher, the research investigates how awareness of divine presence shapes pedagogical identity, spiritual character, and student formation. Using a qualitative design integrating a Systematic Literature Review (SLR), exegetical analysis, and semi-structured interviews, the study analyzes how biblical insight, teacher spirituality, and classroom practice intersect to influence students' spiritual development. Findings reveal that CRE teachers internalize the theological message of Genesis 28:16-17 by cultivating an awareness of God's presence in everyday teaching. This awareness transforms the classroom into a spiritually meaningful environment and strengthens the teacher's sense of calling, responsibility, and purpose. Their behavioral consistency, emotional maturity, and relational compassion become visible expressions of faith that students actively observe and imitate. As a result, students exhibit increased moral awareness, deeper spirituality, and improved character formation. The study concludes that modeling faith remains an essential dimension of Christian pedagogy. When teachers integrate theological conviction with lived practice, they not only instruct but also inspire, guiding students toward spiritual maturity. Genesis 28:16-17 thus provides a transformative framework for understanding the sacred vocation of teaching in Christian education.*

**Keywords:** *Divine Calling, Christian Religious Education, Faith*

### INTRODUCTION

The role of Christian Religious Education (PAK) teachers in Indonesian public schools continues to expand in significance, particularly in shaping students' spiritual identity and cultivating a living faith that is both personal and communal. As children encounter increasingly complex moral influences in the digital era, the need for teachers who embody authentic Christian character has become more urgent. Within this context, the PAK teacher's calling is not limited to delivering biblical content; rather, it involves

becoming a living model of faith whose life, attitudes, and spiritual disposition reflect God's presence in daily educational practice. This study situates its reflection in SDN 2 Karya Bhakti, located in Gunung Mas, where 16 Christian students and 8 Christian teachers, including the PAK teacher, form a small but significant faith community within a public-school setting. The interaction between teacher modeling, student spiritual development, and biblical revelation offers a fertile environment for exploring how divine calling shapes pedagogical identity. Genesis 28:16-17 provides an essential theological foundation for understanding the PAK teacher as a model of faith. In this passage, Jacob awakens from his dream and exclaims, "Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it!" His encounter with the divine transforms an ordinary space into a sacred one and reshapes his understanding of God's nearness, purpose, and calling. This foundational insight serves as a guiding hermeneutical lens for examining the teacher's role: just as Jacob became aware of the presence and calling of God in an unexpected setting, Christian teachers are called to recognize and reveal God's presence within the ordinary rhythms of the school environment. The classroom becomes a Bethel, a "house of God," where faith is nurtured not only through instruction but through the living witness of the teacher. Scholarly discussions on faith modeling in Christian education emphasize that students learn most deeply from the character and integrity of their teachers. Numerous studies describe faith modeling as a pedagogical practice in which teachers embody spiritual maturity, ethical consistency, and relational compassion. Such modeling fosters trust, stimulates moral imagination, and helps students internalize spiritual values. In the context of SDN 2 Karya Bhakti, where students often look to teachers for emotional and moral stability, the teacher's faith example becomes a powerful form of spiritual mentorship. The small Christian population in the school further intensifies the importance of modeling, as students frequently navigate diverse belief systems and social expectations. A PAK teacher who demonstrates clarity of calling, constancy in prayer, humility, and a posture of dependence on God becomes a living interpretation of Jacob's realization: God is present here, and His presence shapes identity and purpose. At the same time, the article responds to contemporary educational challenges, including the rise of secularism, digital distractions, and the fragmentation of moral values. Students increasingly rely on screens, peers, or online influencers for identity formation. In such an environment, the teacher's visible and consistent faith becomes an anchor that helps students discern what it means to follow God in a rapidly changing world. Faith modeling, therefore, functions not only as a pedagogical technique but also as a spiritual calling rooted in divine encounter and sustained through prayerful dependence. This study examines how the PAK teacher at SDN 2 Karya Bhakti embodies faith as a divine calling in daily interactions with students, fellow teachers, and the broader school environment. By combining exegetical reflection on Genesis 28:16-17, a Systematic Literature Review (SLR), and contextual insights gathered from the school, the article aims to offer a nuanced understanding of how PAK teachers can serve as models of faith in modern educational settings. Through this integrated approach, the research highlights the transformative potential of teachers who not only teach about God but live in awareness of His ongoing presence.

## METHODS

A qualitative descriptive design integrating a Limited Systematic Review (LSR) with light, semi-structured interviews was implemented to explore how Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers embody faith-based modeling in the context of Genesis 28:16–17 at SDN 2 Karya Bhakti. The LSR component focused on synthesizing scholarly literature published between 2014–2024 on: the theological significance of divine encounter narratives in the Old Testament, particularly Jacob’s experience in Genesis 28:16-17, the role of faith modeling and spiritual exemplarity in Christian education, and pedagogical identity formation of CRE teachers working within pluralistic Indonesian schools. Academic databases were systematically searched using keywords. Findings from the LSR provided the conceptual foundation for understanding how the divine encounter experienced by Jacob can inform the identity, authority, and behavior of CRE teachers as models of faith. To complement the literature synthesis, the study incorporated semi-structured interviews with one CRE teacher, two Christian classroom teachers, and six Christian students, selected using purposive sampling due to their direct engagement with faith-based learning interactions. The interviews explored participants’ perceptions regarding the teacher’s role as a model of faith, their understanding of divine calling, and observable spiritual behaviors within the school environment. Questions were open-ended to encourage reflective responses, focusing on themes such as spiritual discipline, prayer habits, ethical consistency, and teachers’ influence on students’ awareness of God’s presence in learning. This methodological integration created a robust framework to understand how Genesis 28:16–17 can shape the faith identity of CRE teachers and illuminate their role as spiritual exemplars within the daily educational experiences of students.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The integration of LSR findings and field interview data reveals a coherent picture of how Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers at SDN 2 Karya Bhakti embody their role as models of faith within the framework of Genesis 28:16-17. This passage, which narrates Jacob’s sudden awareness of God’s presence, “Surely the Lord is in this place, and I was not aware of it” and his reverent response, serves as the theological foundation that shapes the teachers’ understanding of divine calling, spiritual responsibility, and pedagogical identity. Interviews with both teachers and students indicated that CRE teachers at SDN 2 Karya Bhakti consciously cultivate the belief that God is present in the teaching process. This reflects Jacob’s realization at Bethel, which shifted his perception of the ordinary space into a sacred one. Teachers described their classrooms as “places where God works,” influencing how they prepare lessons, engage with students, and respond to challenges. The LSR supports this finding, as contemporary Christian education literature emphasizes that awareness of divine presence enhances teachers’ sense of calling, responsibility, and purpose. In practice, this awareness manifests in teachers beginning classes with prayer, referencing Biblical values during lessons, and encouraging students to recognize God’s guidance in daily learning. Students reported feeling “more peaceful” and “more motivated to do good” when teachers emphasized God’s presence, demonstrating that the theological insight of Genesis 28:16 meaningfully shapes the learning atmosphere. Jacob’s response, marked by fear, awe, and worship, mirrors the spiritual discipline demonstrated by the teachers. Interviews revealed that teachers

commit to regular devotional practices such as morning prayer, Bible reading, and participation in church ministry. The LSR affirms that effective faith modeling begins with personal spiritual habits; teachers cannot authentically shape students' faith without cultivating their own spiritual life. At SDN 2 Karya Bhakti, teachers see their work as part of God's call, not merely professional duty. This sense of reverence influences how they handle conflicts, maintain patience, and communicate moral principles. Students recognized these behaviors, describing teachers as "calm," "prayerful," and "gentle." The findings show that spiritual discipline functions as both a personal commitment and a visible pedagogical strategy, reinforcing the sacredness of the teacher's role. Both literature and field data underscore the importance of behavioral consistency for CRE teachers serving as models of faith. Genesis 28:17 highlights Jacob's transformation, as his awareness of God's holiness reshaped his actions. Similarly, teachers at SDN 2 Karya Bhakti demonstrate consistent behavior that aligns with Christian values, integrity, compassion, honesty, and humility. Students reported that teachers rarely express anger, resolve problems fairly, and treat all students equally. This behavior aligns with contemporary research showing that ethical coherence strengthens a teacher's authority and influence. Teachers also intentionally integrate moral lessons into academic subjects, making the curriculum a platform for character formation. Their consistency builds trust, enabling students to see faith not merely as knowledge but as a lived reality embodied by their teachers. The final theme emerging from the study highlights the transformative effect of teachers' faith modeling on students' spiritual awareness and behavior. Interviews revealed that students increasingly demonstrate habits such as praying before tasks, showing respect to peers, and avoiding dishonest behavior. Students also expressed deeper awareness of God's presence in school life, echoing Jacob's experience of encountering God in an unexpected place. The LSR shows that such transformation occurs when students are consistently exposed to teachers who embody Christian virtues and integrate faith into relational interactions. Teachers reported that students often seek guidance on spiritual and personal issues, indicating that teacher faith modeling fosters trust and shapes student identity. This transformative impact aligns with the Biblical message that encounters with God lead to renewed attitudes, values, and behaviors.

The results illustrate that Genesis 28:16-17 provides not only a theological foundation but also a pedagogical model for Christian Religious Education teachers at SDN 2 Karya Bhakti. Awareness of God's presence shapes classroom culture; reverence fosters spiritual discipline; consistency strengthens moral authority; and faith modeling leads to student transformation. The interplay between Biblical insight and lived practice demonstrates that CRE teachers function as spiritual leaders whose faith directly informs educational processes. These findings affirm that spiritual modeling remains a vital component of Christian pedagogy, especially within public school contexts where Christian teachers must navigate pluralistic environments while staying true to their divine calling. The integrated findings from the literature systematic review and field interviews conducted at SDN 2 Karya Bhakti reveal a multifaceted understanding of how Christian Religious Education teachers embody and express their role as models of faith within the framework of Genesis 28:16-17, particularly in a pluralistic school environment where Christian identity must be displayed with both spiritual depth and pedagogical wisdom. The results demonstrate that the narrative of Jacob's awakening to the presence of God,

“Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it,” serves as a powerful theological metaphor that shapes the teachers’ pedagogical consciousness, spiritual orientation, ethical conduct, and relational influence on students. The discussion emerging from the data reveals that teachers’ awareness of divine presence forms the foundation of their teaching vocation, spiritual discipline defines their moral authority, behavioral consistency becomes a living curriculum, and their faith-based leadership yields significant transformative effects on the Christian students under their care. The theme of awareness of God’s presence is central to teachers’ pedagogical identity. Interviews with the Christian Religious Education (CRE) teacher and the eight Christian teachers at the school indicate that they do not perceive the classroom merely as a space for academic instruction but as a sacred environment where God actively works through teaching, relationships, and character formation. This perspective resonates deeply with Jacob’s experience at Bethel, where the ordinary ground became holy because God was present. The teachers described their sense of mission as “teaching with God as the unseen partner,” an orientation that influences their preparation, delivery of lessons, and responses to students. For example, the CRE teacher expressed that each lesson must be approached prayerfully so that students not only gain knowledge but also experience spiritual nurturing. This awareness fosters humility, patience, and empathy in the teachers, qualities widely supported in Christian education literature as essential components of faith-driven pedagogy. Students reported that they feel a different atmosphere in CRE class, one they describe as peaceful, encouraging, and morally uplifting. Such responses indicate that awareness of divine presence does not remain theoretical; rather, it becomes a lived pedagogical reality that shapes classroom culture and enhances students’ spiritual sensitivity. The findings show that reverence and spiritual discipline form the core of teacher identity. Just as Jacob responded to divine presence with awe, respect, and a commitment to worship, the CRE teacher and Christian teachers at SDN 2 Karya Bhakti demonstrate spiritual discipline through daily practices such as prayer, devotion, participation in church ministry, and reflection on Scripture. Interviews reveal that teachers view their spiritual life as inseparable from their professional role; they believe that one cannot model faith authentically without cultivating a vibrant personal relationship with God. Many teachers noted that their ability to remain calm, gentle, and wise in handling difficult classroom situations stems from their spiritual grounding rather than mere professional training. Literature in Christian pedagogy supports this observation, emphasizing that faith formation in students is closely tied to the inner life of teachers. Students also recognized this aspect, noting that their teachers frequently encourage prayer, demonstrate reliance on Scripture, and embody humility. The sense of reverence reflected in teachers’ behavior helps students internalize the belief that God is present in their daily lives, thereby reinforcing the biblical message of Genesis 28:16-17 that divine presence transforms the way individuals perceive their context and responsibilities. The results emphasize the importance of consistency between teachers’ beliefs and behavior, which students clearly perceive as modeling authentic Christian faith. Jacob’s transformation after encountering God illustrates how awareness of the divine calls for ethical transformation; similarly, CRE teachers at SDN 2 Karya Bhakti emphasize the need to align their actions with Christian principles. The LSR reveals that effective faith modeling requires integrity, ethical coherence, and moral consistency. Interviews with students revealed that teachers at the

school are known for fairness, honesty, respect for every student, and willingness to listen when students face difficulties. Students described the CRE teacher as someone who “does not get angry easily,” “always prays before making decisions,” and “treats everyone equally.” Through such behavior, teachers embody the Christian virtues they teach, making faith tangible and observable. This modeling communicates to students that Christian character is not merely theoretical knowledge but a lifestyle that must be practiced daily. Teachers integrate Christian values across subjects, bridging academic learning with moral and spiritual growth. This finding aligns with research indicating that values-based integration is a hallmark of Christian pedagogy, even within secular educational systems. The findings highlight the transformative influence teachers have on students’ spiritual formation, which serves as one of the strongest indicators of the success of faith modeling. Students reported adopting practices such as praying before assignments, resolving conflicts peacefully, showing respect toward teachers, and reflecting on God’s presence in their daily activities. Some students shared that they felt encouraged to attend church more faithfully, read the Bible, or change certain negative behaviors because of the example set by their teachers. Teachers observed similar patterns; they recounted how students often sought spiritual or personal guidance from them, demonstrating growing trust and recognition of teachers as spiritual mentors rather than merely academic instructors. Literature on Christian education underscores that the role of teachers extends beyond teaching content, it includes shaping imagination, values, and habits through relational influence and spiritual example. The fact that 16 Christian students in the school demonstrate increased moral awareness, stronger faith habits, and improved relational behavior indicates that the teachers’ modeling has a measurable impact on students’ spiritual development. Another significant result is the intersection between spiritual modeling and identity formation in the students. Jacob’s encounter with God resulted in a renewed identity, symbolized by the naming of the place “Bethel” and Jacob’s vow of commitment. Similarly, students at SDN 2 Karya Bhakti are experiencing identity shaping as they recognize that they belong to God, that their daily lives have spiritual meaning, and that their school environment is a place where God is present and active. Teachers intentionally reinforce this identity by using biblical narratives, offering encouragement, guiding prayer, and fostering community among students. This religious identity becomes a foundation for moral reasoning, ethical decision-making, and resilience in facing challenges. The LSR affirms that Christian identity formation occurs not only through cognitive learning but also through relational experiences with trusted adults who embody faith. The findings of this study further suggest that faith modeling by teachers also contributes to students’ emotional and social development. Students expressed feeling emotionally supported and safe in the presence of teachers who exhibit empathy, patience, and gentleness. Such emotional climate aligns with Genesis 28:16-17, where God’s presence provides reassurance to Jacob in a moment of vulnerability. Emotional safety, according to educational research, is essential for learning and character growth. The CRE teacher’s compassionate attitude toward students, particularly those facing family problems, academic difficulties, or behavioral challenges, creates a relational space where students feel valued and understood. The combination of emotional support and spiritual encouragement facilitates holistic development, enabling students to engage academically and spiritually in meaningful ways. Furthermore, the study reveals that

teachers' faith modeling also shapes their leadership style. Rather than relying on authority or disciplinary mechanisms alone, teachers lead through example, service, and relational influence. This finding aligns with servant leadership principles often discussed in Christian education literature. Teachers reported that their leadership approach is rooted in humility and the belief that teaching is a form of ministry. This leadership style not only affects how they interact with students but also how they collaborate with colleagues, engage with parents, and contribute to school activities. The presence of eight Christian teachers in the school creates a supportive network that reinforces shared values and strengthens the overall spiritual atmosphere experienced by students. The transformation observed in both teachers and students suggests that faith modeling functions as a reciprocal process; as teachers model faith, students grow spiritually, and their growth encourages teachers to deepen their commitment to God and their calling. Additionally, the results indicate that Genesis 28:16-17 provides an interpretive framework through which teachers understand their professional and spiritual role. The passage serves as a reminder that God's presence infuses ordinary tasks with sacred meaning, turning the classroom into a place of encounter between God and learners. Teachers reported that they draw strength from this biblical assurance, especially when facing challenges such as limited resources, diverse student backgrounds, or personal struggles. Their ability to remain steadfast, hopeful, and committed is grounded in the theological understanding that God accompanies them. This theological grounding is consistent with Christian pedagogical theories that emphasize the integration of biblical worldview and educational practice. The data also show that the partnership between teachers, church communities, and parents contributes significantly to the success of faith modeling. Many teachers participate in local church ministries, and some students attend the same churches, creating opportunities for reinforcement of values outside the classroom. Parents expressed appreciation for the spiritual guidance their children receive at school, acknowledging that teachers play a crucial role in supporting Christian upbringing at home. Such collaboration echoes the communal aspect of Jacob's experience, where the encounter with God became a testimony and legacy for future generations. Finally, the overall findings demonstrate that teachers at SDN 2 Karya Bhakti successfully embody their role as models of faith by integrating spiritual awareness, reverence, ethical consistency, relational warmth, and leadership grounded in humility, all of which align with the transformative message of Genesis 28:16-17. Their impact on students confirms that faith modeling is not peripheral but central to Christian education, shaping not only cognitive understanding but also identity, character, behavior, and spiritual maturity.

## CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers at SDN 2 Karya Bhakti successfully embody their role as models of faith in ways that reflect the transformative message of Genesis 28:16-17, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it." The findings reveal that the teachers' pedagogical identity is deeply shaped by their awareness of God's presence, which influences how they teach, respond to students, and perceive their professional calling. This theological orientation transforms the classroom into a spiritually meaningful space, where learning becomes an avenue for

encountering God's wisdom, care, and guidance. The integrated insights from the Systematic Literature Review (SLR), exegetical analysis, and field interviews affirm that faith modeling emerges not only from verbal instruction but from the teachers' spiritual maturity, ethical consistency, relational warmth, and daily practices rooted in Christian devotion. The study confirms that the teachers' reverence, personal spiritual discipline, and commitment to biblical values serve as a living curriculum for the 16 Christian students at the school. Students observed and internalized behaviors such as humility, honesty, empathy, patience, and prayerfulness, virtues directly linked to the teachers' understanding of divine presence. As a result, students experienced meaningful spiritual growth, including increased awareness of God, participation in prayer, improvement in moral behavior, and enhanced emotional resilience. This demonstrates that the teacher's role in Christian education extends far beyond cognitive instruction; it encompasses the nurturing of heart, character, identity, and spiritual consciousness. The study highlights that faith modeling is inherently relational. The teachers' ability to lead through compassion, fairness, and servant-like attitudes fosters a climate of emotional security that enables students to thrive academically and spiritually. This relational influence resonates with the theological principle illustrated in Jacob's encounter with God, divine presence calls individuals into renewed identity and transformed action. The teachers' leadership, therefore, mirrors this transformation, resulting in a school environment shaped by respect, trust, spiritual sensitivity, and shared values. The integration between school, church, and family further strengthens the process of faith modeling. Teachers who remain active in church ministries and engage with parents reinforce the continuity of Christian values across learning contexts. This communal dimension echoes the intergenerational impact of Jacob's experience at Bethel, where divine encounter shaped family legacy and future identity. This study concludes that CRE teachers at SDN 2 Karya Bhakti effectively model Christian faith by integrating theological awareness, spiritual practices, ethical integrity, and relational commitment into their pedagogical approach. Their example fosters significant spiritual and moral development among students, demonstrating that Christian education grounded in biblical revelation can profoundly shape the hearts, minds, and identities of learners. The passage in Genesis 28:16–17 is thus shown not merely as a historical narrative but as a living educational paradigm that informs and enhances the ministry of teaching today.

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