



Christian Education in Service to Discipleship: Biblical Mandates for Home, Church, and School

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ABSTRACT

Christian education cannot be reduced to academic achievement or institutional growth; its authenticity lies in discipleship. Rooted in Scripture, discipleship shapes believers who love God, self, others, and creation, while fulfilling the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19–20). This study explores how seven biblical mandates—dominion, population, self-governance, love of God, love of self, love of others, and mission—provide a theological framework for Christian education across the triadic contexts of home, church, and school. The research employs a theological-normative approach integrated with literature analysis. Scriptural exegesis was conducted to interpret the seven mandates as foundations for discipleship formation. Academic works on Christian pedagogy, discipleship models, and educational theology were examined to establish dialogue between biblical principles and contemporary practice. A contextual analysis was applied to explore the implementation of these mandates within home, church, and school. The outcome was synthesized into an integrative framework that prioritizes discipleship as the central goal of Christian education. Findings demonstrate that the seven mandates function as both theological principles and pedagogical guidelines. The home serves as the primary site of faith transmission, the church provides communal discipleship through worship and fellowship, and the school integrates intellectual and moral formation within a biblical worldview. Together, these contexts foster holistic discipleship that transcends cognitive learning by cultivating character, devotion, stewardship, and mission-oriented engagement. Christian education is authentic only when aligned with discipleship. By grounding practices in biblical mandates, it equips believers not merely for academic success but for faithful living, transformative mission, and the advancement of God’s kingdom.

Keywords: *Christian Education, Discipleship, Biblical Mandates*

INTRODUCTION

Christian education, in its essence, cannot be reduced to academic achievement or institutional development alone. To be faithful to its name, Christian education must

prioritize discipleship as its primary goal, shaping believers who are spiritually mature, morally upright, and missionally engaged. Discipleship formation addresses the ultimate transcendent concerns of human life—relationship with God, self, others, and creation (Matthew 28:19–20). This study explores how Christian discipleship can be nurtured through educational processes within the triadic contexts of home, church, and school. It identifies seven biblical mandates that serve as theological foundations: the Dominion Mandate (Genesis 1:28), the command to populate the earth (Genesis 9:1), the call to self-governance (Romans 12:2), the First Greatest Commandment (Matthew 22:37), the twofold Second Greatest Commandment (Matthew 22:39), and the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19–20). By engaging with these mandates, Christian education transcends cognitive knowledge and develops holistic discipleship that equips believers to live faithfully and meaningfully in the world.

The core of Christian education lies in discipleship, and discipleship itself is deeply rooted in Scripture. The Dominion Mandate (Genesis 1:28) teaches believers that education should prepare individuals to responsibly steward creation. Far from legitimizing exploitation, this mandate frames human beings as caretakers whose learning must integrate ecological awareness and responsible living. Education, therefore, cannot merely produce knowledge-workers but must cultivate disciples who embrace stewardship as an act of worship to the Creator. The second mandate, the call to populate the earth (Genesis 9:1), reminds Christian families and institutions that education involves generational responsibility. Christian parents and teachers are tasked with transmitting faith across generations, ensuring that children are not only equipped with skills for life but also rooted in the fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of wisdom (Proverbs 9:10). This intergenerational vision sets Christian education apart from secular educational systems that prioritize human progress without anchoring it in divine purpose. The third foundation is the mandate of self-governance (Romans 12:2). Discipleship-oriented education emphasizes transformation through the renewing of the mind. Unlike purely cognitive models of education, Christian discipleship shapes character, will, and discernment. It trains learners to resist conforming to the patterns of the world and instead embody Christ-centered virtues such as humility, justice, and integrity. In this way, education becomes not only intellectual formation but also moral and spiritual transformation.

At the heart of Jesus' teaching stands the First Greatest Commandment—to love God with all one's heart, soul, and mind (Matthew 22:37). Christian education, therefore, must cultivate a life of devotion. Academic excellence divorced from love for God falls short of the true goal of Christian learning. Worship, prayer, and scriptural meditation are not extracurricular but central components of education that direct intellectual pursuits toward glorifying God. Closely tied to this is the Second Greatest Commandment, which contains two inseparable parts: love for self and love for others (Matthew 22:39). Christian education must nurture healthy self-understanding rooted in God's image. This means equipping students to see their worth not in achievements but in their identity as children of God. At the same time, love for others extends education into the realm of service, compassion, and justice. Discipleship-oriented learning, therefore, forms students who not only know biblical truth but also embody Christ's love in concrete social action. The final biblical mandate is the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19–20). This

command to make disciples of all nations gives Christian education its missional character. Education that ends with personal growth alone is incomplete; it must propel believers outward into witness and mission. Home, church, and school become training grounds for equipping disciples who will carry the gospel into diverse cultural and social contexts. In this way, Christian education resists privatization of faith and instead embraces its public, transformative role in society.

The triadic contexts of home, church, and school serve as overlapping arenas where discipleship formation takes place. In the home, parents are the first educators, entrusted with instilling biblical values and modeling Christ-like character (Deuteronomy 6:6–7). The church functions as the community of faith that nurtures corporate worship, fellowship, and service. Meanwhile, the school provides structured learning that integrates academic subjects with theological reflection. When these three contexts are aligned, discipleship formation becomes holistic and effective. However, fragmentation between them often leads to shallow spiritual development, where faith is compartmentalized rather than integrated into every sphere of life. Christian education is most authentic when it is discipleship-oriented. By grounding its practices in seven biblical mandates, it transcends the limits of cognitive instruction and prepares believers to live faithfully in relation to God, self, others, and creation. Within the interconnected spaces of home, church, and school, discipleship formation ensures that Christian education not only transmits knowledge but also shapes identity, character, and mission. Ultimately, the goal of Christian education is not institutional prestige or academic accolades but the cultivation of disciples who embody the love of God and bear witness to His kingdom in the world.

METHODS

This study employs a theological-normative approach that is carefully integrated with literature analysis to examine the foundations of discipleship in Christian education. Rather than relying on empirical data collection, the research is conceptual in nature, with its primary objective being the construction of a biblical-theological framework that places discipleship at the heart of Christian pedagogy. Through scriptural exegesis, the study identifies and interprets seven biblical mandates that serve as fundamental principles for the nurturing of discipleship: the Dominion Mandate, the call to populate the earth, the mandate of self-governance, the First Greatest Commandment, the two aspects of the Second Greatest Commandment (love of self and love of others), and the Great Commission. Each of these biblical imperatives is not merely theological doctrine but provides a concrete foundation for shaping educational practices that are consistent with the transformative nature of Christian discipleship. The process of exegesis undertaken in this study serves as a theological anchor to ensure that the biblical text remains the primary reference point in defining the mission of Christian education. Through this process, the mandates are not treated as abstract concepts but as guiding principles that inform and shape pedagogy, moral formation, and spiritual development. At the same time, the research also engages with scholarly literature in the fields of Christian pedagogy, discipleship models, and educational theology. This engagement allows for a dialogue between biblical principles and contemporary educational practices,

ensuring that the proposed framework is both faithful to Scripture and responsive to the challenges of modern education. A contextual analysis was then employed to examine how these biblical mandates are practically applied within the triadic contexts of home, church, and school. The home is emphasized as the primary site of spiritual nurture, where parents serve as the first disciplers of their children by modeling faith and obedience to God. The church provides the communal dimension of discipleship, offering worship, teaching, and fellowship as collective practices that shape believers into the likeness of Christ. Meanwhile, the school represents the formal context where academic learning is integrated with spiritual formation, ensuring that education does not become detached from its ultimate purpose of cultivating disciples. The final stage of the methodology involved the development of an integrative framework that synthesizes these biblical mandates with educational practices. This framework highlights discipleship as the central goal of Christian education, resisting the temptation to subordinate spiritual formation to purely academic achievement. Instead, it proposes a model in which intellectual, moral, and spiritual growth are united under the call to follow Christ faithfully. By aligning Christian education with the demands of discipleship, the study contributes to a renewed understanding of how theology and pedagogy must converge in order to serve the eternal and transcendent mission of forming true disciples.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Christian education, when grounded in Scripture, must be understood as a process of discipleship rather than simply the transfer of cognitive knowledge or the cultivation of academic success. Discipleship, by its very nature, is holistic, encompassing spiritual maturity, moral integrity, relational ethics, and mission. The seven biblical mandates—namely the Dominion Mandate (Genesis 1:28), the command to populate the earth (Genesis 9:1), the call to self-governance (Romans 12:2), the First Greatest Commandment (Matthew 22:37), the Second Greatest Commandment in its two dimensions of self-love and love of others (Matthew 22:39), and the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19–20)—provide a comprehensive theological foundation for Christian education that seeks to form disciples who embody the fullness of life in Christ. Each mandate not only functions as a theological principle but also has pedagogical implications for the triadic contexts of home, church, and school, which together serve as complementary environments for nurturing discipleship. The Dominion Mandate, articulated in Genesis 1:28, frames humanity as stewards of God’s creation, entrusted with the task of cultivating, caring for, and managing the earth responsibly. Within Christian education, this mandate moves beyond environmental awareness toward a deeply theological vision of stewardship. Families become the first site where children learn respect for creation, whether through daily practices of conservation, responsible use of resources, or cultivating gratitude for the natural world. The church, in turn, teaches stewardship as a form of worship, reminding believers that care for creation reflects obedience to the Creator. Schools integrate this mandate by embedding ecological and ethical responsibility into curricula, ensuring that science, ethics, and theology converge in preparing students to see creation care as an expression of faith. This holistic approach equips disciples not only to live responsibly in the present but also to embody hope for the restoration of creation in God’s future kingdom.

The mandate to populate the earth, reiterated after the flood in Genesis 9:1, highlights continuity of life and faith across generations. For Christian education, this does not simply refer to physical reproduction but points to the spiritual responsibility of transmitting faith to succeeding generations. In the household, parents are called to be the primary faith educators, embodying the injunction of Deuteronomy 6:6–7 to teach God's commands diligently to their children. The church strengthens this mandate by creating intergenerational structures of discipleship in which older members mentor the young, ensuring that Christian identity is not fragmented but handed down as a living tradition. Schools contribute by cultivating a Christian worldview in their pedagogy, so that academic competence is always shaped within the horizon of faith continuity. In the Indonesian context, where pluralism is woven into social fabric, this mandate becomes especially vital, for it sustains Christian identity while also preparing believers to engage faithfully with a diverse society.

The call to self-governance, expressed in Romans 12:2 as a refusal to conform to the patterns of the world and a transformation through the renewal of the mind, underscores the moral and spiritual autonomy required of every disciple. Christian education cultivates this capacity by instilling virtues of self-control, discernment, and ethical responsibility. In the family, children are guided toward self-discipline through daily routines and moral formation shaped by Scripture. Churches emphasize spiritual practices such as prayer, fasting, and accountability, fostering habits of inner transformation. Schools, meanwhile, nurture critical thinking and responsibility, equipping students to resist the uncritical absorption of secular ideologies. Self-governance is thus not mere autonomy but a Spirit-formed capacity to align one's life with God's will, demonstrating integrity in both private and public spheres.

The First Greatest Commandment, recorded in Matthew 22:37, situates love of God with heart, soul, and mind as the central axis of discipleship. Within Christian education, this commandment prioritizes spiritual formation over intellectual accumulation. Families play a key role by establishing rhythms of prayer, worship, and Bible reading, shaping children to see devotion as a daily discipline. The church embodies this mandate communally, providing worship and teaching that orient believers toward God as the source and goal of all life. Schools are challenged to integrate faith into academic disciplines, helping students to perceive intellectual engagement itself as an act of worship when directed toward God's truth. In this way, Christian education resists compartmentalization, insisting that every aspect of learning is drawn into the orbit of loving God wholly. Equally essential is the Second Greatest Commandment, with its twofold dimension of loving self and loving others (Matthew 22:39). The call to love oneself is not a license for selfishness but an affirmation of the dignity of every person as created in the image of God. Christian education fosters self-worth and resilience by grounding identity in divine image-bearing rather than in cultural or social measures of value. Families affirm this truth in the way they nurture children's gifts and dignity. Churches reinforce it through pastoral care and encouragement of spiritual gifts, helping believers to recognize and steward their uniqueness for God's purposes. Schools develop students' talents and provide spaces for holistic growth, ensuring that academic achievement is accompanied by character formation. In turn, the love of others extends

discipleship outward into relational ethics, teaching empathy, forgiveness, and service. Families cultivate cooperation, respect, and reconciliation in the home; churches organize ministries of compassion and outreach; schools foster collaborative learning and civic engagement. Together, these practices prepare disciples to embody relational integrity in societies marked by division and conflict. Finally, the Great Commission, articulated in Matthew 28:19–20, serves as the culminating mandate, calling disciples to make disciples of all nations. Christian education must therefore be intrinsically missional, equipping believers for witness in diverse cultural and religious contexts. Families nurture children as gospel-bearers in daily life, cultivating a sense of responsibility for the mission of God. Churches mobilize their members for evangelism and service, rooting missional activity in worship and discipleship. Schools, particularly in pluralistic societies like Indonesia, integrate missional literacy into curricula, equipping students to engage culture critically and compassionately while maintaining a global vision of God's kingdom. The Great Commission ensures that discipleship is never static or insular but outward-facing, oriented toward the transformation of the world through Christ.

Conclusion

Christian education can only be considered authentic when it is inseparably linked to discipleship. Education in the Christian tradition is not merely an intellectual exercise or the accumulation of knowledge, but rather a holistic formation of individuals to become faithful followers of Christ. The seven biblical mandates—dominion, population, self-governance, love of God, love of self, love of others, and the Great Commission—offer a theological foundation that ensures Christian education remains rooted in God's redemptive purposes. Each mandate serves not only as a theological principle but also as a pedagogical guide that reorients the purpose and practice of Christian education toward shaping disciples whose lives reflect the values of the kingdom of God. The mandate of dominion emphasizes humanity's responsibility to steward creation as an act of worship and obedience to God. In educational practice, this translates into cultivating ecological awareness, vocational responsibility, and integrity in managing resources. The population mandate highlights the role of families and communities in nurturing future generations, reminding Christian education to affirm the importance of intergenerational faith transmission. The call to self-governance stresses personal discipline and moral responsibility, teaching students to make choices that align with biblical values and the lordship of Christ. Equally central are the mandates of love: love for God, love for self, and love for others. Love for God situates education as an act of devotion, integrating worship, prayer, and spiritual practices into the learning process. Love for self, rightly understood, affirms human dignity as created in the image of God, encouraging students to develop their gifts and pursue holistic well-being. Love for others underscores the social dimension of discipleship, calling Christian education to cultivate compassion, justice, and service within both local and global contexts. The Great Commission, as the culmination of these mandates, anchors Christian education in mission, equipping learners not only with knowledge but also with the courage and capacity to witness and serve in the world. These biblical mandates take on concrete form in the triadic contexts of home, church, and school. In the home, parents bear the primary responsibility for nurturing the

foundations of faith through example, prayer, and instruction. Christian education here is deeply relational and rooted in daily practices of discipleship. In the church, communal worship, preaching, fellowship, and mission activities provide the environment for corporate formation, where disciples learn to live out their faith together. Schools, in turn, complement these contexts by shaping intellectual capacities, moral reasoning, and vocational readiness, all grounded in a biblical worldview.

When aligned with these mandates, Christian education transcends the narrow confines of academic achievement. It becomes a transformative process that nurtures disciples who embody faith, integrity, and mission in every sphere of life. The ultimate aim is not only to prepare believers for eternal life but also to empower them for transformative engagement in society. By fulfilling the dual call to love God and neighbor, Christian education participates in the advancement of God's kingdom, producing disciples whose lives bear witness to Christ in word and deed. Thus, discipleship-centered Christian education represents both a theological imperative and a practical necessity for the flourishing of the church and the transformation of the world.

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