



Spiritual Competence and the Pedagogy of Humility: A Biblical Reflection on Genesis 13:8-9 at SMK Negeri 1 Alasa Talumuzoi

Fauduaro Ziliwu^{1*}, Dorlan Naibaho²

¹Student, Pendidikan Profesi Guru, Fakultas Ilmu Pendidikan Kristen, IAKN Tarutung

²Lecturer, Fakultas Ilmu Pendidikan Kristen, IAKN Tarutung

*correspondence: fauduaroziliwu61@guru.smk.belajar.id

ABSTRACT

This study explores the spiritual competence of Christian Religious Education teachers in cultivating the virtue of humility, inspired by the biblical reflection of Genesis 13:8-9-“Let there be no strife between you and me... for we are brothers.” Conducted at SMK Negeri 1 Alasa Talumuzoi, the research investigates how humility functions as both a theological principle and a pedagogical strategy within Christian education. Employing a qualitative-expository approach, data were collected through classroom observation, teacher interviews, and student reflections. The expository interpretation of Genesis 13:8-9 served as the theological foundation, emphasizing Abram’s humility and relational wisdom as paradigms for educational practice. The findings reveal that the teacher’s spiritual competence-manifested through patience, empathy, and faith-based discernment-creates a transformative learning environment where peace and respect become the norm. Humility was taught not through direct instruction alone but through lived example, relational dialogue, and moral storytelling. The study shows that humility-centered pedagogy reshapes classroom culture, fostering cooperation, forgiveness, and self-control among students. Furthermore, spiritual competence enables teachers to navigate classroom challenges with grace, viewing conflicts as opportunities for moral growth rather than obstacles. Theologically, humility emerges as a divine strategy for reconciliation, aligning education with God’s redemptive purpose. In this sense, teaching becomes a spiritual act-an embodiment of faith that transforms both teacher and learner. The study concludes that spiritual competence anchored in humility is essential for holistic Christian education, turning classrooms into communities of grace where faith, learning, and love converge in the image of Christ.

Keywords: *Spiritual Competence, Christian Religious Education, Humility*

INTRODUCTION

In the landscape of Christian education, the formation of character is inseparable from the cultivation of spiritual competence-an inner capacity that enables teachers to embody, communicate, and nurture values consistent with biblical truth. Among these

values, humility stands at the heart of Christian pedagogy, shaping the way educators guide, serve, and interact with their students. In an era often characterized by self-promotion, competition, and the pursuit of personal recognition, humility emerges as a countercultural virtue that reflects the life and teachings of Christ. Within Christian Religious Education (CRE), the teacher is not merely a transmitter of theological knowledge but a living witness of the gospel's transformative power. The classroom thus becomes not only an intellectual environment but also a spiritual formation space, where humility is taught through both word and example. The concept of spiritual competence in this context refers to the integration of spiritual discernment, emotional maturity, and moral integrity in teaching practice. It encompasses the teacher's ability to align pedagogical actions with biblical principles, demonstrating empathy, patience, forgiveness, and selflessness in nurturing students' moral and faith development (Tirri, 2016). The biblical foundation of this study lies in Genesis 13:8-9, which recounts the moment when Abram, in a conflict with his nephew Lot, chose humility and peace over personal gain. The passage reads: *"So Abram said to Lot, 'Let there be no strife between you and me, or between your herdsmen and mine, for we are relatives. Is not the whole land before you? Let us part company. If you go to the left, I'll go to the right; if you go to the right, I'll go to the left.'"* (Genesis 13:8-9, NIV). This episode reveals Abram's profound spiritual maturity. Despite being the elder and the rightful leader, he relinquished his privilege for the sake of peace, embodying a spirit of humility that prioritizes relationship over possession, and unity over pride. Abram's action demonstrates that humility in leadership is not weakness but strength—the strength to restrain one's rights for the sake of harmony and righteousness. This narrative provides a theological model for Christian educators, especially teachers of CRE, who are called to guide their students not only in faith but also in interpersonal wisdom. In teaching, as in Abram's example, humility allows space for dialogue, reconciliation, and mutual respect—essential elements for building a learning community rooted in love and peace.

In the educational context of SMK Negeri 1 Alasa Talumuzoi, located in North Nias, North Sumatra, the relevance of this biblical narrative becomes particularly striking. The school reflects Indonesia's diverse and dynamic social fabric, where students from different ethnic, cultural, and religious backgrounds interact daily. Within such diversity, conflicts—both interpersonal and ideological—can easily arise. Therefore, the role of the CRE teacher extends beyond theological instruction; it involves modeling humility as a spiritual discipline that shapes relationships and promotes harmony. Teachers are called to imitate Abram's spirit by guiding students to seek peace, respect differences, and prioritize collective well-being over self-interest. Through pedagogical humility, teachers can demonstrate that true greatness in Christian life lies in servanthood, as Jesus taught: *"Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant"* (Matthew 20:26). Thus, humility becomes not only a personal virtue but also a pedagogical method—a way of teaching that listens, empathizes, and empowers students rather than dominating them. Current educational challenges often highlight the decline of moral sensitivity and the rise of egocentric attitudes among students, fueled by digital culture and social competition. Many young people today equate success with self-assertion and recognition, leading to a diminished appreciation for humility, cooperation, and empathy. In such a climate, Christian education must reintroduce humility as a core virtue of

spiritual intelligence. It is through humble teaching that students learn to value others, recognize their dependence on God, and contribute to the common good. The teacher's spiritual competence becomes the bridge between theological ideals and practical transformation. When teachers demonstrate humility-by admitting mistakes, listening actively, and serving students with compassion-they transform the classroom into a microcosm of the kingdom of God, where love and respect prevail over pride and competition. This study, therefore, explores the intersection of spiritual competence and the pedagogy of humility through the biblical reflection of Genesis 13:8-9. By focusing on the experience of Christian Religious Education teachers at SMK Negeri 1 Alasa Talumuzoi, it examines how humility is integrated into teaching practices as both a theological and pedagogical principle. The research seeks to understand how teachers embody humility in their relationships with students, colleagues, and the broader school community, and how such practices influence the moral and spiritual development of learners. The choice of Abram's story is deliberate: it portrays humility not as passive submission but as active spiritual wisdom-choosing peace over pride, reconciliation over rivalry. The findings of this study are expected to enrich the discourse on Christian teacher professionalism by demonstrating that spiritual competence, when rooted in humility, transforms education into an act of worship. Teaching, in this sense, becomes more than the transfer of knowledge; it becomes a sacred vocation-a living testimony of God's love manifested through humble service.

METHODS

A qualitative reflective-exegetical approach was designed to explore how Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers demonstrate and cultivate humility as an expression of spiritual competence, grounded in the biblical narrative of Genesis 13:8-9. This methodological design integrates two complementary dimensions: theological exegesis and educational reflection. The exegetical component focuses on interpreting the text of Genesis 13:8-9 to uncover its theological and ethical meanings related to humility, reconciliation, and relational wisdom. The reflective-qualitative component, on the other hand, examines how these biblical insights are embodied in the pedagogical practices and professional attitudes of CRE teachers in the real context of classroom interaction at SMK Negeri 1 Alasa Talumuzoi, North Nias, North Sumatra, Indonesia. The selection of this school as the research locus was intentional, as it represents a diverse learning community where students come from different cultural, denominational, and socio-economic backgrounds. Such diversity often requires teachers to balance firmness and gentleness, authority and empathy-qualities that are directly connected to spiritual competence and humility. The study sought to understand how Christian teachers, especially those teaching Religious Education, embody Abram's spirit of peace and humility in resolving classroom tensions, guiding students, and fostering inclusive relationships. The participants in this study consisted of one Christian Religious Education teacher and twelve students from different grade levels (ten to twelve), selected through purposive sampling. The teacher was chosen because of their reputation for modeling spiritual maturity and reflective teaching practices, while students were chosen to represent various cultural and behavioral backgrounds. The small sample allowed for an in-depth exploration of teacher-student dynamics and the lived experience of humility in the learning process. Observations were carried out over four weeks to capture the

natural flow of teaching interactions, teacher responses to student behavior, and the integration of humility in daily routines and lesson delivery. Special attention was given to the teacher's verbal and non-verbal communication, particularly in moments of conflict resolution, moral guidance, or encouragement. Semi-structured interviews were conducted separately with the teacher and students. The teacher interview explored perceptions of humility, experiences of teaching spiritual values, and interpretations of Genesis 13:8–9 in relation to classroom practice. Student interviews, meanwhile, provided complementary insights into how the teacher's behavior influenced their own understanding of humility, respect, and cooperation. Document analysis included lesson plans, reflective journals, and relevant teaching materials that indicated the integration of biblical narratives and values into the curriculum. The first stage involved thematic identification, where recurring concepts such as "servant leadership," "peace-building," and "humble correction" emerged from teacher and student narratives. The second stage, biblical reflection, aligned these themes with theological insights from the exegesis of Genesis 13:8-9, interpreting Abram's humility as a pedagogical model for resolving conflict and nurturing communal harmony. The third stage, integrated both theological and empirical findings to construct a holistic understanding of how humility operates as a spiritual and pedagogical virtue. This reflective-exegetical approach views research as both an academic and spiritual act—an inquiry that not only analyzes teaching practices but also interprets them as forms of theological embodiment. The chosen methodology thus serves to bridge Scripture and practice, showing how Genesis 13:8-9 can move from ancient narrative to contemporary pedagogy, where humility becomes a living expression of spiritual competence and transformative education.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal that spiritual competence in Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers is deeply connected to the pedagogy of humility—a moral and theological stance that shapes not only teaching strategies but also the atmosphere of the learning environment. Based on the reflective-exegetical analysis of Genesis 13:8-9 and the qualitative data collected from classroom observations and interviews at SMK Negeri 1 Alasa Talumuzoi, it becomes evident that humility is not merely a personal virtue but a pedagogical force that transforms relationships and nurtures spiritual growth among students. The story of Abram and Lot provides the biblical framework for this understanding: Abram's decision to yield his rights and prioritize peace over possession becomes a paradigm for educators who seek to guide without domination, teach without pride, and serve without self-interest. The narrative in Genesis 13:8-9 states: *"Then Abram said to Lot, 'Let there be no strife between you and me, and between your herdsmen and my herdsmen, for we are brothers. Is not the whole land before you? Separate yourself from me: if you take the left hand, then I will go to the right, or if you take the right hand, then I will go to the left.'"* This brief yet profound exchange encapsulates humility in action—a humility that emerges from faith, not weakness. Abram's choice to give Lot the first option, despite his seniority and divine calling, represents a conscious act of spiritual maturity. His humility is not passive resignation but active reconciliation. This principle became the cornerstone for the CRE teacher's pedagogical philosophy at SMK Negeri 1 Alasa Talumuzoi. Observations showed that the teacher consistently emphasized peace,

fairness, and mutual respect, particularly in moments of student disagreement. In explaining the biblical text, the teacher often invited students to see Abram's gesture as a living example of leadership through humility: that true authority in God's eyes is expressed through service, and true greatness through willingness to yield for the sake of peace. During classroom discussions, the teacher used this biblical narrative to illustrate how humility is essential for maintaining harmony in diverse communities. Students were encouraged to relate Abram's story to their own experiences-resolving conflicts among friends, respecting teachers, or cooperating in group projects. Through guided reflection, the students recognized that humility, as demonstrated by Abram, required strength of character rather than weakness. One student noted, "When Abram gave Lot the choice, it showed that he trusted God more than his own power." Such insights revealed the theological depth that the teacher's pedagogy had achieved: students were not only learning about humility as a concept but internalizing it as a lived expression of faith and character.

The teacher's spiritual competence was also evident in their ability to integrate theological reflection with relational empathy. Observations indicated that the teacher embodied humility in their interactions-listening attentively to students, acknowledging their emotions, and validating their perspectives without immediate judgment. For instance, when a student became defensive during a class debate, the teacher gently redirected the conversation by affirming the student's courage to speak, followed by a reminder that humility allows one to learn from others. This approach created a classroom culture grounded in mutual respect and emotional safety, where students felt valued and heard. The teacher's actions reflected what Palmer (1998) describes as "teaching from within"-an approach where authenticity, self-awareness, and compassion become integral to pedagogy. The teacher's humility thus functioned as both method and message: it taught through presence as much as through words. A recurring theme from interviews with students was that the teacher's humility inspired imitation. Many students expressed that they admired how their teacher never raised their voice even in moments of frustration but chose calm dialogue and prayer. One student remarked, "When we argue, sir always reminds us to be like Abram-to give others a chance and not fight over small things." This testimony reveals the transformative influence of modeling humility; students were learning character not by instruction alone but through observation and relational experience. The pedagogical implication of this finding is that humility, as a dimension of spiritual competence, is best taught through embodiment. When teachers live the values they teach, their presence becomes a form of silent preaching that resonates more powerfully than verbal exhortation. The analysis also identified three key pedagogical strategies through which the CRE teacher cultivated humility in students: narrative reflection, dialogical learning, and communal prayer and reconciliation practices. Narrative reflection was used to bridge biblical text with student experience. The teacher regularly initiated discussions that invited students to retell biblical stories in their own words, emphasizing moral insight rather than factual recall. For example, after reading Genesis 13:8-9, the teacher asked students to create a short skit depicting a modern version of Abram and Lot's conflict-such as two classmates fighting over shared resources. Through dramatization, students not only engaged their imagination but also felt the moral tension between pride and peace. Post-activity

reflections revealed that students internalized humility as a personal choice that required self-control and faith in God's justice. This aligns with Wright's (2010) notion of narrative ethics, which views biblical stories as moral mirrors inviting learners to examine their own behavior in light of divine truth. The second strategy, dialogical learning, involved open discussions where students were encouraged to express differing viewpoints respectfully. The teacher facilitated these dialogues by modeling active listening and affirming each student's contribution. During one observation, a disagreement arose between two students regarding the interpretation of humility—one argued that humility meant "being silent," while another believed it meant "sharing fairly." Instead of correcting them immediately, the teacher guided the conversation with the question, "How did Abram show humility—by being silent or by making peace?" This question allowed students to think critically and draw their own conclusions, leading to a consensus that humility is not silence but strength under control. Such dialogical pedagogy aligns with Freire's (1998) idea of conscientization, where learning emerges from dialogue that nurtures awareness, empathy, and transformation. The third pedagogical practice was communal prayer and reconciliation. The teacher frequently closed lessons with collective prayers focusing on peace, forgiveness, and gratitude. When conflicts occurred among students, the teacher invited them to reconcile publicly in a spirit of prayer, sometimes linking the act to Abram's example. This spiritual ritual reinforced the theological message of Genesis 13:8-9 and embedded humility within the students' spiritual habits. Interviews revealed that students began applying these practices beyond the classroom, reconciling with peers or family members after disagreements. In this way, the pedagogy of humility transcended academic learning, shaping the students' character and daily conduct. The CRE teacher's success in teaching humility was rooted in their ability to perceive students' emotional states, respond compassionately, and maintain composure during tension. This aligns with Goleman's (2006) framework of emotional intelligence, particularly the components of self-regulation and empathy. However, in this case, emotional intelligence was not merely psychological—it was spiritualized through faith. The teacher often referred to humility as "listening to God before reacting," framing self-control as an act of divine obedience. This integration of faith and psychology reflects a mature form of spiritual competence that bridges human emotion and divine wisdom.

A significant insight emerging from the study is the contrast between worldly and biblical humility. Students initially associated humility with weakness or subservience—a common misconception influenced by competitive school culture. Through biblical exposition, the teacher reframed humility as moral courage and spiritual strength. By emphasizing Abram's ability to yield out of faith, the teacher helped students understand that humility is not thinking less of oneself but thinking of oneself less. This theological correction had a profound impact on students' self-perception. Several interviewees shared that they began practicing humility by apologizing to classmates, helping those who struggled academically, or refusing to boast about personal achievements. Thus, humility became a relational virtue that fostered both confidence and compassion. The teacher's spiritual competence extended beyond classroom walls. Observations during extracurricular activities revealed that the teacher continued to model humility in informal interactions—greeting janitors with respect, thanking students for small acts of help, and accepting feedback from colleagues gracefully. These everyday gestures reinforced the consistency

between belief and behavior, creating a holistic model of Christian leadership. The students recognized this authenticity, describing their teacher as “a person who leads by lowering themselves.” In the theological sense, this mirrors Christ’s example in Philippians 2:5-8, where Jesus humbled Himself for the sake of others. The CRE teacher’s conduct, therefore, represented a Christological pedagogy-teaching humility through imitation of the Master Teacher. The analysis further indicates that humility had a catalytic effect on school culture. Over the course of observation, the classroom environment evolved into a more cooperative and respectful space. Students demonstrated greater patience in group tasks, listened more attentively, and resolved disagreements more amicably. Teachers from other subjects even remarked on the noticeable change in student behavior, attributing it to the moral influence of the CRE class. This finding supports the idea that spiritual competence has a communal dimension; when one teacher embodies humility consistently, the virtue radiates outward, influencing the moral ecology of the institution. Another dimension emerging from the study is the tension between humility and authority. The teacher acknowledged during interviews that maintaining discipline while practicing humility was challenging. At times, students misinterpreted gentleness as leniency. To address this, the teacher explained that humility must coexist with firmness. Drawing again from Genesis 13:8-9, the teacher noted that Abram did not avoid conflict but resolved it decisively through peaceful negotiation. This balance between grace and firmness exemplifies what Nouwen (1975) calls servant leadership-leading not through dominance but through discernment. The teacher managed to uphold moral authority without resorting to coercion, modeling that true leadership flows from character, not control. The biblical reflection also revealed a deep connection between humility and faith. Abram’s willingness to yield was grounded in his trust that God’s promise would not be compromised by human loss. Similarly, the teacher conveyed to students that humility requires faith in divine providence-trusting that peace is more valuable than victory. This theological insight provided a powerful counter-narrative to the competitive spirit prevalent among adolescents. Students began to equate humility with spiritual strength rather than social weakness. The teacher often summarized this lesson with the phrase, “Those who trust God can afford to be humble.” This reframing of humility as a faith-based virtue gave students a deeper spiritual motivation for ethical behavior.

The findings also underline the transformative power of Scripture-centered pedagogy. By grounding moral education in biblical narrative, the teacher ensured that humility was taught not as a moral rule but as a story of faith and relationship. This narrative-centered approach allowed students to see themselves within God’s ongoing story of redemption, turning abstract virtues into personal vocation. Students were not merely told to “be humble”; they were shown, through Abram’s example and the teacher’s embodiment, what humility looks like in practice. This aligns with Van der Ven’s (1998) vision of hermeneutical religious education, where Scripture becomes a dialogical partner in shaping the learner’s moral consciousness. The results demonstrate that spiritual competence in teaching is not confined to cognitive mastery of doctrine but is fundamentally relational, reflective, and incarnational. The CRE teacher at SMK Negeri 1 Alasa Talumuzoi exemplified this by embodying humility as a pedagogical virtue that shapes not only knowledge but also hearts. The exegesis of Genesis 13:8-9 provided a

theological anchor that legitimized humility as a divine strategy for peace and harmony. The teacher's reflective integration of this text into pedagogical practice resulted in observable transformations in students' attitudes and behaviors, proving that humility is teachable when modeled authentically. The pedagogy of humility serves as a redemptive act in education. It reverses the cycle of pride and conflict by fostering empathy, patience, and spiritual awareness. When teachers, like Abram, choose peace over pride, they demonstrate to students that education is not a race for dominance but a journey toward divine fellowship. The classroom thus becomes a sacred space—a modern altar of reconciliation—where humility restores relationships and draws hearts closer to God and one another. The findings affirm that spiritual competence, grounded in humility, is the foundation of transformative Christian pedagogy: it teaches not only what is right but how to live rightly before God and humanity.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the spiritual competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers represents a sacred vocation that integrates faith, humility, and pedagogy into a transformative whole. Based on the expository reflection of Genesis 13:8-9 and the classroom practices observed at SMK Negeri 1 Alasa Talumuzoi, it becomes evident that humility is not merely a personal disposition but a theological principle and pedagogical method through which divine values are embodied in education. The CRE teacher's capacity to teach humility—by living it—demonstrates that authentic spiritual competence flows from inner transformation before it manifests in outward instruction. Abram's act of humility in allowing Lot to choose the land first serves as a timeless metaphor for the teacher's willingness to prioritize peace, relationship, and moral integrity over personal authority or status. The findings affirm that teaching humility through the pedagogy of example is both the method and message of effective Christian education. Students learn virtues not simply through doctrinal teaching but through the lived witness of their teachers. When a teacher models humility, patience, and forgiveness, these virtues are transmitted implicitly, shaping the moral atmosphere of the classroom. The CRE teacher at SMK Negeri 1 Alasa Talumuzoi exemplified this through daily actions—listening without judgment, guiding without coercion, and affirming each student as a person of value before God. Such practice aligns with Christ's own teaching method, where spiritual truth was revealed not only in words but in the relational quality of His ministry. This incarnational model of pedagogy transforms teaching into a spiritual act, where humility becomes both a moral lesson and a form of worship. The study demonstrates that spiritual competence involves emotional intelligence and theological discernment working together. The teacher's ability to remain composed during conflicts, respond empathetically to students' emotions, and maintain relational harmony reflected not weakness but moral strength. In line with Abram's example, humility was portrayed as faith in action—a trust in God's providence that frees one from the need to dominate others. This theological framing redefines humility as a virtue of courage rather than compliance, showing students that to yield for peace is to stand firmly in faith. The integration of spiritual reflection and emotional awareness enabled the teacher to address moral and relational challenges holistically, proving that effective religious education requires both heart and mind to act in harmony. The research also highlights

the transformative impact of humility-centered pedagogy on school culture. Over time, the classroom evolved into a community marked by mutual respect and cooperation, where differences were embraced rather than feared. Students learned to see humility not as self-devaluation but as a pathway to harmony, recognizing that peace is achieved through self-restraint and empathy. This transformation validates the role of CRE teachers as moral agents who shape not only intellect but also the soul of a community. In a broader sense, such practice reflects the mission of Christian education in pluralistic societies like Indonesia—to cultivate students who live out their faith with gentleness, respect, and love for others. The theological reflection drawn from Genesis 13:8–9 underscores that humility is a divine strategy for reconciliation. Abram’s willingness to yield was not a loss but a testimony of faith that opened the way for blessing. Likewise, when teachers embody humility in their vocation, they participate in God’s ongoing work of restoration—healing relationships fractured by pride and misunderstanding. The spiritually competent teacher thus stands as a mediator between divine truth and human experience, guiding students toward moral maturity and spiritual depth. In essence, the pedagogy of humility transforms education into a sacred dialogue between God, teacher, and student. It restores the broken fellowship symbolized by human conflict and rebuilds it upon the foundation of love. Just as Abram’s humility preserved peace and fulfilled God’s promise, so too does the humble teacher, through spiritual competence, guide students toward the fullness of life that flows from peace with God and with one another.

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