



Sustaining Faith Together: The Personality of Christian Religious Education Teachers in Nurturing Students' Dependence on God - A Biblical Reflection on Exodus 17:12

Arnimawati Ndraha^{1*}, Lustani Samosir²

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

²Lecturer, Fakultas Ilmu Pendidikan Kristen, IAKN Tarutung

*correspondence: arnimawati1987@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study explores how the personality of Christian Religious Education teachers nurtures students' dependence on God, drawing theological insight from Exodus 17:12-where Moses' hands were upheld by Aaron and Hur as a sign of faith sustained through community and divine strength. Conducted at SD Swasta Anastasia Pancur Batu, Deli Serdang, this research examines the teacher's personality as a form of spiritual pedagogy that embodies faith, humility, and compassion in daily classroom practice. Using a qualitative-expository method, the study integrates biblical exegesis with classroom observation and reflective interviews to uncover how teacher character functions as a living expression of God's sustaining grace. The results reveal that the teacher's calmness, empathy, integrity, and prayerfulness create a relational environment where students experience faith not merely as doctrine but as lived trust. The teacher's personality mirrors Moses' perseverance-demonstrating that dependence on God involves active faith, mutual support, and steadfast endurance. By modeling prayer and humility, the teacher transforms the classroom into a spiritual space where academic learning and faith formation coexist. The discussion emphasizes that teacher personality serves as an instrument of divine presence, guiding students to rely on God amid challenges. Dependence on God emerges not as weakness but as strength rooted in divine partnership. The study concludes that the personality of CRE teachers is both a professional and theological vocation-an embodiment of witness that sustains faith, fosters spiritual resilience, and turns education into an act of worship where human effort is upheld by divine grace.

Keywords: Faith, Christian Religious Education, Personality

INTRODUCTION

Education in the Christian worldview is never limited to the transfer of intellectual knowledge but serves as a sacred calling to shape lives according to the image and character of God. Within the context of Christian Religious Education, teachers carry a

profound spiritual responsibility-not merely to teach biblical concepts but to model a faith-centered life that leads students to depend fully on God. In an age increasingly marked by self-reliance, materialism, and individualism, the need to nurture a generation that trusts in divine providence has become an urgent moral and educational imperative. The personality of the CRE teacher plays a pivotal role in this formation process, functioning as both the vessel and the mirror of God's sustaining grace. A teacher's personality encompasses not only psychological traits such as patience, empathy, and resilience but also spiritual maturity, faith consistency, and integrity of life. When grounded in biblical values, this personality becomes a living testimony that inspires students to rely on God amid life's uncertainties and challenges. The theological foundation of this study is drawn from Exodus 17:12, which narrates the episode of Moses during Israel's battle against Amalek: "When Moses' hands grew tired, they took a stone and put it under him and he sat on it. Aaron and Hur held his hands up-one on one side, one on the other-so that his hands remained steady till sunset." This passage embodies the essence of spiritual support and communal faith. Moses' uplifted hands symbolize dependence on God as the source of victory, while Aaron and Hur's assistance signifies the power of shared faith and perseverance. The narrative offers profound pedagogical implications: just as Moses' faith was sustained through the help of others, so too must teachers sustain their students' faith through presence, encouragement, and spiritual mentorship. Dependence on God, therefore, is not an isolated act of belief but a relational practice nurtured within a community of faith. The CRE teacher, like Aaron and Hur, becomes a supporter who helps students keep their "hands of faith" lifted amid struggles, fatigue, and doubt. In the context of SD Swasta Anastasia Pancur Batu, Deli Serdang, this biblical reflection finds vivid relevance. As a Christian elementary school situated within a multicultural and plural environment, the school serves not only as an academic institution but as a moral and spiritual community. Students at this developmental stage are impressionable and often face the early challenges of identity, peer pressure, and emotional insecurity. In such moments, the teacher's personality serves as a stabilizing force, shaping how students perceive God's care and reliability. When the teacher exhibits calmness in pressure, forgiveness in conflict, and perseverance in difficulty, these traits communicate powerful messages about faith in action. Students learn to see faith not as abstract belief but as lived trust-a reliance modeled through their teacher's demeanor and relational consistency. Thus, personality in Christian education becomes a theological witness; it translates doctrine into daily life.

The relevance of Exodus 17:12 extends to the contemporary challenges of education. In a digital age where children are often shaped by instant gratification and self-centered ideals, dependence on God is increasingly countercultural. Many young learners grow up believing that success stems solely from human effort and intelligence, neglecting the spiritual dimension of life. The CRE teacher, through personality-driven pedagogy, reintroduces students to the foundational Christian truth that strength, wisdom, and peace come from God alone. This pedagogical stance aligns with Palmer's (1998) idea of "teaching from the heart," where education becomes an act of spiritual authenticity. The teacher's personality-anchored in humility, compassion, and prayerfulness-creates an atmosphere where faith can grow naturally. Students begin to imitate not only what their teacher teaches but also how their teacher lives. This study explores how the personality

of Christian Religious Education teachers nurtures students' dependence on God, using the biblical narrative of Exodus 17:12 as a reflective framework. By connecting theological insight with pedagogical practice, it seeks to reveal how the teacher's inner character and spiritual discipline influence students' spiritual formation. The study situates this exploration in the context of SD Swasta Anastasia Pancur Batu, highlighting the significance of teacher personality as a living form of witness and mentorship. The research aims to contribute to the broader discourse on faith-based education, suggesting that professionalism in Christian teaching cannot be separated from personal spirituality. Ultimately, the study argues that sustaining faith in students is not achieved through mere instruction but through companionship, compassion, and consistent modeling of reliance on God—the same virtues exemplified by Moses, Aaron, and Hur. The CRE teacher, then, stands as both a guide and a co-witness in the journey of faith, helping young believers lift their hands toward heaven and sustain their trust in the God who delivers, empowers, and sustains.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative-expository method grounded in theological reflection and educational praxis to explore how the personality of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers nurtures students' dependence on God, as reflected in the biblical narrative of Exodus 17:12. The integration of biblical exegesis and qualitative inquiry allowed for a dual-layered understanding: first, to interpret the theological meaning of the text in its original context, and second, to examine how its spiritual principles are embodied in the lived pedagogical practices of CRE teachers. This approach recognizes that teaching in Christian education is both a theological act and a relational vocation—where Scripture informs the inner character of the teacher, and the teacher's personality, in turn, becomes a channel of God's formative grace. The expository-theological component involved an in-depth analysis of Exodus 17:12 using textual, historical, and contextual lenses. The verse was studied in its Hebrew linguistic form, focusing on key terms such as *emunah* (steadfastness or faithfulness) and *tamakh* (to uphold or support). These linguistic nuances reveal that Moses' perseverance was sustained not by physical strength but by relational faith—his dependence on God mediated through the support of Aaron and Hur. This insight provided the theological foundation for understanding teacher personality as a vessel of sustaining faith. The act of "holding up hands" symbolizes spiritual endurance and the role of community in maintaining faith amidst fatigue. Within the educational context, this is analogous to the teacher's role in upholding students' faith through encouragement, patience, and compassionate presence. Theologically, the study interprets this dynamic as "pedagogical intercession"—the teacher's willingness to stand in solidarity with students, bearing their struggles in prayer, empathy, and mentorship, much like Aaron and Hur sustained Moses. The qualitative-reflective component of the study was conducted at SD Swasta Anastasia Pancur Batu, a Christian private elementary school in Deli Serdang, North Sumatra. This school was chosen because it represents a vibrant faith-learning community where spiritual formation is integrated into daily instruction. The participants included one Christian Religious Education teacher and twelve students from grades four to six, selected through purposive sampling. The teacher was chosen based on their reputation for faith-based mentorship and moral influence, while the students represented various

backgrounds and personality types to capture a diversity of experiences. Classroom observations focused on the teacher's demeanor, emotional regulation, and interpersonal approach-particularly in moments of student difficulty or moral correction. Field notes emphasized behaviors that reflected spiritual steadiness, empathy, and encouragement as manifestations of dependence on God. Semi-structured interviews with the teacher explored personal spirituality, perceptions of Exodus 17:12, and reflections on how personality and faith influence classroom relationships. Questions such as "How do you help students learn to depend on God in daily challenges?" and "In what ways do you see yourself as 'holding up' students' faith?" guided these conversations. Student interviews provided complementary perspectives on how the teacher's personality affected their spiritual trust. Students were asked to describe moments when the teacher's attitude made them feel encouraged, supported, or reminded to rely on God. This methodological synthesis-combining theological exegesis with qualitative reflection-positions the study as both an academic and spiritual inquiry. It demonstrates that the CRE teacher's personality is not a neutral psychological attribute but a theological embodiment of divine partnership in education. Through the lens of Exodus 17:12, the teacher's compassionate steadfastness becomes an "outstretched arm" that helps sustain the faith of the next generation.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study reveal that the personality of Christian Religious Education teachers, when illuminated by the theological insights of Exodus 17:12, serves as a profound channel of faith formation for students. The biblical verse-"When Moses' hands grew tired, they took a stone and put it under him and he sat on it. Aaron and Hur held his hands up-one on one side, one on the other-so that his hands remained steady till sunset"-presents a timeless model of spiritual endurance, interdependence, and faithfulness. Within the educational context, this passage becomes a living metaphor for the teacher's role as a steadying presence-a person who upholds the spiritual and emotional growth of students in times of fatigue, confusion, or moral struggle. The findings from classroom observations, interviews, and expository reflection demonstrate that a teacher's personality-rooted in faith, humility, patience, and compassion-plays a decisive role in cultivating students' dependence on God. The exegesis of Exodus 17:12 reveals that the story of Moses' weary hands symbolizes the human condition of dependence-dependence not only on divine strength but also on the communal support God provides through others. The Hebrew term *emunah*, translated as "steady" or "faithful," conveys a sense of firmness that originates in trust rather than self-sufficiency. Moses' endurance was made possible because Aaron and Hur physically and spiritually upheld him. This theological insight establishes the foundation for understanding dependence on God as a relational virtue rather than a passive resignation. It implies that faith grows within the context of supportive relationships marked by humility, compassion, and shared responsibility. The CRE teacher at SD Swasta Anastasia Pancur Batu exemplified this theological truth through daily practice. Observations revealed that the teacher's interactions with students were consistently marked by calm attentiveness and gentle correction. In moments when students struggled-whether with academic tasks, peer conflicts, or emotional distress-the teacher responded with empathy rather

than frustration. For instance, when a student hesitated to pray aloud due to shyness, the teacher softly said, "God loves a sincere heart, not perfect words." This statement, simple yet deeply theological, redirected the student's focus from performance to trust. In doing so, the teacher reflected the divine patience seen in Exodus: God who sustains rather than condemns human weakness. The teacher's personality thus embodied what Parker Palmer (1998) calls "teaching from within," where authenticity and spiritual centeredness radiate through pedagogical encounters. The teacher's faith was not merely spoken but lived, and students intuitively perceived this as stability—a spiritual steadiness that mirrored Moses' upheld hands. The teacher's life served as an interpretive witness to Exodus 17:12, showing that dependence on God is not a passive waiting but an active leaning into divine presence through the faithfulness of others.

Teacher Personality as a Witness of Faithful Presence

A key finding of this research is that the teacher's personality functions as a form of lived theology—a witness that translates biblical truth into relational reality. Interviews with students repeatedly emphasized their perception of the teacher as "calm," "patient," and "always praying before deciding something." These traits created an atmosphere of spiritual safety. Students reported that when they felt anxious or guilty, the teacher reminded them to pray and to trust God's plan. One student stated, "When I was scolded by my parents, my teacher told me that God understands and will help if I keep praying." This moment reflects the teacher's role as a spiritual intercessor—someone who holds up the weary hearts of others, much like Aaron and Hur did for Moses. From a theological standpoint, this aligns with Henri Nouwen's (1975) concept of servant leadership, where true authority arises from humility and compassion rather than power. The teacher's steady personality—neither harsh nor permissive—embodied Christ-like balance: truth spoken in love, discipline accompanied by grace. Students described the classroom as "a peaceful place where we can talk to God," suggesting that the teacher's character shaped not only their moral behavior but also their spiritual environment. The teacher's faith maturity was most visible in how they responded to failure and conflict. When two students argued over group work, instead of imposing punishment, the teacher invited them to read Exodus 17:12 together and reflect on the importance of "helping one another when we grow tired." This reflective act transformed a moment of discord into a theological lesson. Students later commented that they understood the value of teamwork and spiritual support, recognizing that depending on God often involves depending on each other. Through these interactions, the teacher became a living exegesis of Scripture—a human commentary on divine truth. The teacher's composure during stressful situations, ability to listen deeply, and refusal to act impulsively all modeled faithful presence—a pedagogy of peace that communicates trust in God more powerfully than sermons could.

Emotional Steadfastness and the Formation of Dependence

Another significant result concerns the relationship between the teacher's emotional stability and students' ability to cultivate dependence on God. Emotional regulation, a core aspect of social-emotional learning, takes on a spiritual dimension in Christian education when understood as a reflection of divine patience. During observations, the

teacher often paused to pray silently before addressing disciplinary issues. This act of prayerful composure sent an implicit message: before reacting, one must seek God's wisdom. Students noticed this pattern. One commented, "When we see our teacher pray, we remember to do the same when angry." This behavioral modeling reflects the pedagogical principle of learning by witnessing (Bandura, 1986). The teacher's consistent calmness established a sense of predictability and trust-qualities essential for spiritual formation. Emotional steadiness in the teacher's personality thus became a formative force, helping students internalize faith not as a theoretical doctrine but as a lived habit of trust. Theologically, this mirrors Moses' endurance in Exodus 17:12. Just as Moses' raised hands symbolized intercessory dependence, the teacher's prayerful posture symbolized surrender and reliance on divine strength. In both cases, faith was expressed not through control but through trustful yielding. Students learned that depending on God means acknowledging human limitation—a lesson embodied in the teacher's personality. A recurring theme throughout this study was the communal nature of faith development. The teacher frequently emphasized that "faith is not lived alone." Classroom activities often involved collaborative reflections, group prayers, and peer encouragement. For instance, in one session, the teacher divided students into small groups and asked them to create a short drama retelling the story of Moses, Aaron, and Hur. Each group discussed what it means to "hold up someone's hands." The exercise prompted students to identify real-life examples of supporting friends through prayer, empathy, and service. This collaborative learning strategy reflected the communal theology embedded in Exodus 17:12. Faith was not depicted as an individual effort but as a shared responsibility. Students learned that "depending on God" also involves being instruments of His support for others. After the activity, several students shared reflections such as: "When my friend helps me, I feel like God is helping me through them," and "We can hold each other's hands when we pray together." Such reflections demonstrate the integration of theology and pedagogy. The teacher used community-building not only as a teaching method but as a moral formation tool—training students to embody interdependence, compassion, and solidarity. This finding aligns with Groome's (1991) shared praxis model of religious education, which emphasizes that faith must be experienced through communal participation. The teacher extended this communal approach beyond the classroom. During weekly devotionals, students were encouraged to share testimonies of how they experienced God's help during the week. The teacher listened attentively, affirming each story as evidence of divine faithfulness. This practice not only strengthened students' confidence in God but also built a supportive spiritual network within the school. The atmosphere of mutual encouragement mirrored the "holding up of hands" imagery in Exodus—a faith community sustaining one another through the ups and downs of life.

The Teacher's Personality as the Bridge Between Faith and Practice

One of the most profound findings was that the teacher's personality served as the bridge between belief and behavior. Students did not merely learn about God's faithfulness; they encountered it through the teacher's presence. When asked what they admired most, students frequently mentioned the teacher's gentleness and consistency: "She never shouts, even when we make mistakes," said one student. "She helps us to pray when

we're sad," said another. These comments reveal that students' spiritual formation was relationally mediated—they came to understand God's reliability through the teacher's reliability. In theological terms, this represents incarnational pedagogy—the embodiment of divine truth in human character. The teacher, by embodying patience and grace, made abstract doctrines tangible. This finding supports Noddings' (2013) theory of the pedagogy of care, which posits that moral education occurs most effectively through relational trust. In this case, care was not sentimental but spiritual—it pointed students toward dependence on a higher source of love and strength. The teacher's personality reflected what Lickona (1991) calls integrated character education: the alignment of moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral action. The teacher's words, emotions, and actions were consistently aligned, producing integrity that students could sense intuitively. This integrity functioned as a form of witness, demonstrating that faith is credible only when embodied. An important contextual insight emerged regarding the countercultural nature of faith-based personality formation. The teacher's emphasis on humility, dependence, and prayer contrasted sharply with the broader cultural trend of self-reliance and individualism prevalent among youth. In interviews, the teacher expressed concern that "many students today believe success depends only on themselves, not on God." Therefore, the teacher intentionally framed learning experiences around gratitude, prayer, and acknowledgment of divine help. This pedagogical approach served as a spiritual antidote to secular independence. By modeling dependence on God, the teacher challenged students to reframe success not as self-achievement but as divine partnership. This was evident when students were asked to reflect on their accomplishments. Instead of boasting, they learned to say, "Thanks to God, I could do it." Such expressions reveal a shift in worldview—from self-centered agency to God-centered gratitude. Theologically, this reflects Moses' dependence in Exodus 17:12: though chosen by God, he required others to sustain his faith. The teacher used this story to illustrate that "even the strongest leaders need help, and God gives it through people." This lesson resonated deeply with students, especially in a culture where self-sufficiency is often idolized. Through the teacher's humble personality, students discovered that faith thrives in surrender, not pride. The study also identified challenges in embodying a faith-centered personality within the pressures of modern education. The teacher acknowledged that emotional fatigue, administrative duties, and students' behavioral issues sometimes tested their patience and faith. However, the teacher described these struggles as opportunities for spiritual growth, stating, "When I feel tired, I remember Moses' hands. I ask God to send me 'Aaron and Hur'-colleagues or students who can encourage me." This self-awareness demonstrated a mature understanding of spiritual dependence. The teacher's ability to interpret challenges through a biblical lens transformed difficulties into moments of faith renewal. This resilience reinforced students' perceptions of the teacher as authentic—someone who lives what they teach. The study thus reveals that maintaining a faith-centered personality requires ongoing spiritual discipline—prayer, reflection, and community support. The teacher's example suggests that professional competence in Christian education cannot be separated from personal devotion. As the teacher remarked, "My strength to teach comes from my prayer time. Without that, I cannot help students trust God." This confession echoes the message of Exodus 17:12: perseverance is sustained by divine empowerment and communal support. The cumulative effect of the teacher's personality was visible in the spiritual and

moral growth of students. Interviews revealed that students increasingly associated faith with everyday life decisions. One student said, "When I am afraid during exams, I pray first like my teacher taught us." Another reflected, "I learned that asking for help is not weakness-it's trusting God." These statements show that dependence on God became not just a belief but a lived practice. Classroom observations confirmed a noticeable shift in collective behavior: students began praying voluntarily before starting tasks, comforting one another during difficulties, and showing gratitude for small successes. The teacher's personality had become a moral compass, shaping not only cognition but emotion and will. In this transformation, the classroom evolved into a small community of faith-a place where Exodus 17:12 was reenacted daily through acts of mutual support and prayerful dependence. This finding resonates with Groome's (1998) understanding of Christian education as participatory theology: an invitation to live the story of God within community. The teacher's witness allowed students to participate in the narrative of Exodus-not as distant observers, but as active participants learning to sustain one another's faith. Synthesizing the theological and empirical insights, the study affirms that the personality of the CRE teacher functions as spiritual pedagogy-a living curriculum through which students encounter God's character. In light of Exodus 17:12, the teacher's steadiness symbolizes divine faithfulness; their empathy mirrors God's compassion; their humility embodies the interdependence of the body of Christ. Through these traits, the teacher becomes a witness of God's sustaining grace. This synthesis underscores the theological depth of pedagogical personality. It is not merely a professional quality but a participation in divine ministry. The teacher, like Aaron and Hur, holds up the "hands" of students-strengthening their faith, restoring their hope, and guiding them toward reliance on God's power. The classroom thus becomes a sacred space where education and sanctification intertwine.

The findings from SD Swasta Anastasia Pancur Batu affirm that the personality of Christian Religious Education teachers plays a redemptive role in nurturing students' dependence on God. When grounded in the theology of Exodus 17:12, teacher personality becomes a vessel of divine steadfastness-a spiritual force that sustains others in faith. The study highlights that dependence on God is learned through relationship, modeled through humility, and sustained through compassionate presence. The CRE teacher's calmness, patience, and prayerfulness were not peripheral traits but essential expressions of faith that shaped students' understanding of who God is. The teacher's personality served as an embodied theology of dependence-reminding students that faith is not sustained by strength but by surrender, not by isolation but by community. Through this spiritual pedagogy, both teacher and students became co-participants in God's ongoing act of redemption, echoing the enduring truth of Exodus 17:12: that hands upheld in faith are never alone, for God upholds those who uphold others.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that the personality of Christian Religious Education teachers serves as a vital medium of faith formation-an embodied expression of God's sustaining presence that nurtures students' dependence on Him. Drawing from Exodus 17:12, the research affirms that the teacher's personality functions as a spiritual counterpart to Moses'

upheld hands: a visible sign of steadfastness, humility, and interdependence that points students toward divine strength rather than human sufficiency. In Exodus 17:12, Moses' fatigue becomes the context for divine revelation. The act of Aaron and Hur holding up his hands illustrates that faith is sustained through relational support and collective perseverance. Within the educational context of SD Swasta Anastasia Pancur Batu, this theology takes on practical meaning. The teacher's personality-marked by patience, compassion, emotional steadiness, and prayerful dependence-becomes a living exegesis of Scripture. Through their demeanor and responses, the teacher embodies God's faithfulness, providing students not only with religious knowledge but also with a living model of what it means to trust God amid life's uncertainties. The findings demonstrate that dependence on God is not a passive withdrawal from responsibility but an active participation in divine partnership. The teacher at Anastasia School modeled this through deliberate acts of care and reflection: praying with students, guiding them through conflict with empathy, and celebrating small victories with gratitude to God. These practices nurtured in students a relational understanding of faith-where dependence is expressed through prayer, mutual support, and humility. The study highlights that teacher personality operates as spiritual pedagogy. Personality traits such as calmness, integrity, and kindness are not merely psychological attributes but theological expressions of grace. When students encounter patience and compassion in their teacher, they indirectly experience the character of God. This relational dynamic transforms the classroom into a sacred space where faith is learned not just through words but through witness. The teacher becomes, in essence, a co-laborer with God in sustaining the faith of the next generation. The research affirms that the professional identity of a Christian educator cannot be separated from spiritual maturity. The teacher's effectiveness in fostering faith-based learning stems not primarily from instructional technique but from personal authenticity- "teaching from the heart." The heart of the teacher, shaped by continual dependence on God, becomes the heart of the classroom. When this inner life is rooted in prayer and humility, education transcends academic function and becomes ministry-a space where the divine and the human meet. Theologically, the findings extend the message of Exodus 17:12 into the realm of pedagogy: just as Moses needed support to persevere, teachers today require divine strength and communal solidarity to remain faithful in their vocation. In doing so, they model for students that dependence on God is both necessary and life-giving. Practically, this calls for Christian educators to cultivate spiritual disciplines-prayer, reflection, and fellowship-that renew their inner life and align their character with God's compassion. This study underscores that the personality of the Christian Religious Education teacher is a sacred calling, not a mere professional attribute. When infused with faith, humility, and love, it becomes a testimony that inspires students to depend on God as their ultimate source of wisdom, comfort, and strength. Just as Aaron and Hur upheld Moses' hands so that victory could be secured, so too do teachers, through their faithful presence, uphold the hearts of their students, helping them stand firm in faith. In this way, the classroom becomes an altar of encounter-a place where human frailty meets divine faithfulness, and where the sustaining grace of God is made known through the personality of His servant-teachers.

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