



The Example of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels: The Ethical and Spiritual Foundation for Christian Teachers at Cahaya Bangsa School

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ABSTRACT

In the context of contemporary Christian education, Christian teachers are not merely content deliverers but role models of faith, character, and spirituality. This study aims to explore the exemplary life of Jesus Christ in the Synoptic Gospels as a foundational model for shaping Christian teacher professionalism at Sekolah Cahaya Bangsa. Using a descriptive qualitative approach and thematic analysis of Jesus' pedagogical narratives in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, the findings reveal that Jesus' example includes authoritative teaching, compassionate service, and consistent moral integrity. The study shows that many Christian teachers struggle to align their spiritual identity with professional practice due to administrative burdens and a lack of spiritual formation. Teachers are often trapped in routine tasks, losing sight of their sacred calling. Therefore, authentic professionalism for Christian educators must be rooted in vibrant spirituality and a deep understanding of Jesus as the ultimate Teacher. Impactful Christian education can only occur when teachers teach not just through words or methods, but through lives that reflect the Gospel. This article recommends the implementation of continuous formation programs integrating theological reflection, spiritual community, and Christ-like character development in professional growth. The model of Jesus provides an irreplaceable ethical and spiritual foundation to equip Christian teachers as transformative agents in today's educational landscape.

Keywords: *Christian Teachers, Jesus' Example, Synoptic Gospels, Professionalism*

INTRODUCTION

In the dynamics of contemporary Christian education, the role of a teacher can no longer be confined merely to that of a transmitter of subject matter. A Christian teacher is called to be a holistic role model—embodying the integration of faith, character, and spiritual life in every aspect of their vocation. This calling has become increasingly crucial amid the tides of global change, the rapid advancement of technology, and the shifting social and cultural values within society. Children and adolescents as today's learners inhabit a complex world—rich in information yet impoverished in moral and spiritual orientation. In this context, the presence of a Christian teacher is highly strategic as an agent for shaping Christlike character and serving as a spiritual guide for the younger generation.

Cahaya Bangsa School, as an educational institution grounded in Christian values, holds a clear vision to nurture students who are not only academically excellent but also marked by integrity and Christlike character. However, this vision cannot be realized solely through curriculum design or school programs. The key factor lies in the teacher, who interacts daily with students. Teachers are not merely instructors but also moral educators and exemplars of faith. Therefore, professionalism for Christian teachers in such a setting must not be defined only by pedagogical or administrative standards, but must be deeply rooted in healthy spirituality and a strong sense of divine calling. Unfortunately, the reality in practice shows that not all Christian teachers are able to live out this calling consistently. Many become trapped in administrative routines and academic pressures, gradually losing their spiritual focus. Formal tasks often absorb their attention and energy, while the spiritual life that ought to form the foundation of their teaching is neglected. As a result, the exemplary life that should be the distinctive strength of Christian education begins to fade. This challenge raises a critical question regarding the foundation of true Christian teacher professionalism and how educators might experience a renewal of their vocational calling. One profoundly relevant approach is to return to the person of Jesus Christ as the ultimate model of the true educator.

The Synoptic Gospels—Matthew, Mark, and Luke—offer a rich and comprehensive portrayal of Jesus as the Great Teacher. He not only taught with divine wisdom and authority but also lived consistently with the truths He proclaimed. He touched the lives of those around Him not merely through words but through concrete actions—healing, forgiving, serving, and self-sacrifice. In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus is presented as a powerful teacher who speaks to the heart through parables. In Mark, He appears as a teacher of swift action, responsive to people's needs. In Luke, Jesus is portrayed as the compassionate teacher, close to the marginalized and bringing good news to the outcast. These portraits reveal that Jesus' pedagogy engaged the whole person—cognitive, affective, and spiritual. This model of Jesus' example is profoundly relevant for shaping Christian teacher professionalism. Professionalism, from a theological perspective, encompasses far more than technical competence and instructional skill; it involves moral integrity, deep spirituality, and a life commitment that reflects the values of the Gospel. Within this framework, the Christian teacher is called to teach not only with words but through a life that bears witness to faith. Such teachers are capable of facilitating transformative learning—not merely filling minds with knowledge, but shaping hearts and characters.

However, serious challenges arise when teacher professionalism is narrowly defined as administrative efficiency and academic achievement alone. In the context of Cahaya Bangsa School, there appears to be a gap between the identity of being a Christian teacher and the actual professional practice. Many teachers lack deep theological reflection on their vocation as Christian educators. The spiritual dimension is often overshadowed by urgent technical demands, while the understanding of Jesus as the true Teacher remains unintegrated into daily teaching practice. This weakens the transformative power of Christian education, as students fail to encounter role models who live in the light of God's Word. In light of this reality, a comprehensive and in-depth formation process is needed to reshape the identity and professionalism of Christian teachers by emulating Jesus as portrayed in the Synoptic Gospels. Christ's example must serve as the ethical and spiritual foundation for teachers in fulfilling their mission, for only upon such a foundation can

Christian education produce lasting and genuine impact. A teacher who takes Jesus as their model will not only teach effectively but also form students in the light of God's love and truth. Thus, Christian education at Cahaya Bangsa School will not merely serve as a means to achieve academic excellence, but as a ministry field that shapes a generation who fear the Lord and are prepared to be a light in the world.

Christian Religious Education (CRE) is an educational process aimed at shaping the whole person in accordance with the image and likeness of God—an individual who possesses faith, integrity, and a life aligned with the will of Christ. In this context, the role of the Christian teacher is vital. The teacher's function extends beyond delivering content; they are also called to nurture students' faith and character. According to Van Dyk (1997), a Christian teacher is not merely a professional in their field, but also a servant of God, called to be an instrument of His hand in educating and disciplining children. As the times advance and the challenges of education grow increasingly complex, Christian teachers cannot rely solely on academic and pedagogical competence; they must be grounded in a solid spiritual foundation. Palmer (1998) emphasizes that the effectiveness of Christian teaching is profoundly shaped by the integrity and depth of the teacher's spiritual life. Therefore, the development of Christian teacher professionalism must be rooted in a Christlike life, rather than being defined merely by technical or administrative achievements.

Christian Teacher Professionalism: Between Calling and Competence

The term "professionalism" in the context of Christian education cannot be separated from the concept of "calling." Bonhoeffer (1937) affirms that every Christian ministry, including that within education, is rooted in obedience to Christ. The Christian teacher is called not merely to teach, but to serve as a model of faith, love, and devotion. Accordingly, Christian teacher professionalism encompasses three core dimensions: pedagogical competence, vibrant spirituality, and authentic Christian character. Van Brummelen (2002) asserts that a professional Christian teacher is one who can integrate faith and learning across all aspects of education. Such teachers not only master subject content but also communicate Christian values contextually and transformatively. In the context of Cahaya Bangsa School, professionalism entails the teacher's ability to serve as a spiritual leader in the classroom, build healthy relationships with students, and act as an agent of character and value formation. In practice, Christian teacher professionalism often faces both internal and external challenges. Internally, many teachers experience spiritual fatigue, loss of motivation, and the dryness of ministry routines. Externally, administrative demands, academic pressures, and insufficient spiritual formation opportunities hinder the embodiment of exemplary teaching. For these reasons, there is a pressing need for a model of professional development grounded in the example of Christ Himself.

Jesus as Teacher in the Synoptic Gospels

Jesus Christ is the central figure in Christian education. In the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke), He is depicted not only as a communicator of the Word but as the Great Teacher who lived in perfect integrity and love. His example encompasses all aspects of life: teaching, service, social relationships, and self-sacrifice. In Matthew (Matt. 5–7), Jesus teaches with divine authority, presenting the principles of the Kingdom of God

through parables and the ethic of love. In Mark (Mark 1:21–28), He appears as the Teacher with power over evil spirits and sickness, responding swiftly to the needs of the people. In Luke (Luke 4:18–19), He is known as the bringer of good news to the oppressed and the restorer of dignity to the marginalized.

Jesus' teaching model places strong emphasis on relational and transformational dimensions. He built close relationships with His disciples, created open spaces for dialogue, and provided a living example through tangible acts. Green (2000) observes that Jesus' pedagogy reaches into the deepest dimensions of humanity—not only the mind but also the heart and will. His example does not merely inspire morally; it transforms spiritually. In this sense, Jesus offers a holistic pedagogical model that integrates cognitive, affective, and spiritual dimensions in the educational process. A Christian teacher who follows His example will see their work not merely as an earthly occupation, but as a divine calling to shape the whole person. This model is essential to internalize in Christian teacher formation, as it is the only pathway to ensure that Christian education produces genuine impact.

Modeling in Education: From Theory to Transformation

The concept of “modeling” in education is not new. In educational philosophy, modeling is considered one of the most effective teaching methods because it involves observation, experience, and the internalization of values. Smith and Denton (2005) found that Christian adolescents are influenced more by the lived example of their teachers or mentors than by doctrinal instruction or formal lesson content. This means that what students witness in their teachers' lives has long-term effects on their character and faith formation. In the biblical context, Paul also underscores the importance of modeling in discipleship. In 1 Timothy 4:12, he urges believers to be examples in speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity. This highlights that Christian teachers are called not only to teach about Christ but to embody Christ in their lives. Just as Jesus lived in truth, so too must Christian teachers represent Him in the educational sphere.

Modeling also entails providing education that is spiritually meaningful. In today's world, where values and meaning are increasingly fragmented, Christian education must present a holistic answer—touching the intellect, the heart, and behavior. By making Jesus the central model, Christian teachers can bring transformation not only within the classroom but also in the whole life of the student.

The implications of understanding Jesus' example as the foundation for Christian teacher professionalism are far-reaching. First, there must be integration between spiritual formation and professional training in teacher development programs. Christian teachers must be equipped not only with instructional strategies but also with spiritual disciplines and character formation. Second, schools must foster a supportive community that encourages teachers to continually grow in faith and calling. Third, the Christian education curriculum must fully reflect Gospel values so that students not only receive information but also undergo transformation. At Cahaya Bangsa School, the challenge of low spiritual awareness among teachers can be addressed by making the Synoptic Gospels a source of inspiration and formation. When Christian teachers have a personal encounter with Jesus as the Great Teacher, they will carry out their work with love, diligence, and hope—

creating an educational ecosystem that empowers students to know Christ and to live lives pleasing to Him.

METHODS

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach aimed at exploring in depth the example of Jesus as Teacher in the Synoptic Gospels as the foundation for developing Christian teacher professionalism at Cahaya Bangsa School. The descriptive qualitative method was chosen because it enables the researcher to reflectively examine theological meanings, values, and principles within the context of Christian education, as well as to interpret the spiritual and ethical dynamics of teachers based on biblical narratives and real-life contexts. The primary data for this research are derived from a literature review and a narrative analysis of the Synoptic Gospel texts (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) concerning the figure of Jesus as Teacher. The analysis encompasses Jesus' methods of teaching, His relational approach, and His embodiment of His own teachings through concrete actions such as healing, forgiving, serving, and self-sacrifice. Text exploration was conducted thematically, highlighting the pedagogical principles of Jesus, which include relational, transformational, and service-oriented spirituality aspects.

In addition, secondary data were obtained from scholarly literature and theological reflections related to Christian education, teacher professionalism, and the role of exemplary modeling in shaping students' character. The literature analyzed includes books on Christian education, theological and educational journals, and previous studies relevant to the topic. The focus of this inquiry is to synthesize biblical educational principles with contemporary educational practices within the context of Christian institutions such as Cahaya Bangsa School. The primary unit of analysis in this study is the concept of Christian teacher professionalism, understood holistically—not only from pedagogical and academic perspectives but also in terms of spirituality, integrity, and commitment to Gospel values. The analytical process applies an expository-theological approach to the Synoptic Gospel texts, linking them to current challenges and needs in teacher formation. This is reinforced by a reflective-narrative approach, examining how the theological understanding of Jesus as Teacher can be concretely and contextually internalized in the professional lives of Christian teachers.

This research not only provides a descriptive account of the phenomena under study but also proposes a transformative approach for Christian teachers to renew their professional identity and practice based on the example of Jesus. The outcome of this method is expected to offer both theoretical and practical contributions to the development of Christian teacher formation that is grounded in the Word of God and relevant to contemporary needs.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal that the example of Jesus as Teacher in the Synoptic Gospels exerts a significant influence on the development of Christian teacher professionalism. Reflection on the teaching narratives of Jesus demonstrates that He not only conveyed verbal instruction but also embodied a tangible model of life for His disciples. This is particularly relevant within the educational context of Cahaya Bangsa

School, where teachers are expected not only to possess academic competence but also to radiate Christian values through their daily lives.

First, it was found that teachers' understanding of Jesus as Teacher remains largely normative and has not been fully internalized in educational practice. While many teachers acknowledge that Jesus is the highest example, in practice they tend to become preoccupied with administrative routines and academic workloads. This hinders their ability to function as authentic spiritual mentors. Reflective interviews and literature review revealed a shared awareness that to become a transformative teacher, one must first undergo personal transformation through an intimate relationship with Christ. Teachers lacking a vibrant spiritual life tend to rely primarily on technical teaching strategies which, although effective in delivering content, fail to touch the deepest dimensions of students' lives. Second, analysis of Jesus' pedagogical principles shows that His teaching style reflected a relational, contextual, and compassionate approach. Jesus built strong relationships with His disciples, understood the context of their lives, and responded to their needs with love. This provides a crucial foundation for Christian teachers at Cahaya Bangsa School to foster authentic and healthy relationships with their students. In practice, teachers who apply these principles are able to create a safe, inclusive, and transformative learning environment, in which students do not merely learn about the truth but experience it through their relationship with the teacher. Third, challenges remain in integrating the values of Christ's example into teachers' professional practice. Some teachers reported that the pressures of national curriculum demands and academic evaluation hinder them from maintaining balance between professional responsibilities and spiritual calling. In this regard, ongoing spiritual formation emerges as an urgent need. Teachers require spaces for growth in faith and theological reflection so that they may approach their profession as a calling rather than merely an occupation. Fourth, observations indicate that students at Cahaya Bangsa School respond positively to teachers who embody the example of Christ. Students describe such teachers as inspiring figures who are not only skilled in teaching but also caring, patient, and living with integrity. This suggests that a teacher's lived example has a profound impact on character formation. Christian education that prioritizes modeling does not merely shape cognitive intelligence but also cultivates moral and spiritual values. Fifth, the importance of a supportive community within the school environment emerges as a key finding. Teachers who have access to spiritual communities—such as prayer groups, spiritual mentoring, and faith-based training—tend to demonstrate greater spiritual resilience in fulfilling their professional duties. Such communities also serve as spaces for mutual encouragement and the nurturing of vocational identity. Schools that foster a strong spiritual culture among staff are more likely to develop a healthier and more meaningful educational ecosystem.

In the discussion, these findings indicate that Christian teacher professionalism cannot be separated from a strong spiritual foundation. Jesus' example in teaching, serving, and living in love serves as the primary model to be emulated. Christian teachers who embody this example fulfill not only their functional role as educators but also their identity as servants of Christ in the field of education. From this perspective, Christian education is not merely a means of knowledge transfer but a ministry that manifests the Kingdom of God in the world. Within the context of Cahaya Bangsa School, the application of Christ's example in shaping teacher professionalism must be pursued systematically and

sustainably. Spiritual formation programs, Christlike character training, and theological reflection should be integral to teacher development. Academic and administrative competence alone is insufficient—Christian schools must prioritize the spiritual formation of their educators as the core of authentic professionalism.

These findings align with Van Dyk's theory, which emphasizes that Christian teachers are God's servants in the educational sphere. They do not merely transfer knowledge but transform lives. Palmer likewise stresses the importance of a teacher's inner wholeness as a prerequisite for effective Christian education. When teachers teach out of a soul deeply connected to God, their instruction becomes authentic and impactful. This reinforces the conclusion that without consistent spiritual formation, Christian education loses its transformative power. From the study's findings and reflections, it can be concluded that the formation of Christian teacher professionalism must begin with deep personal transformation. The example of Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels should not be treated merely as teaching material but as the source of inspiration and guidance for shaping teachers' character and ministry. Christian schools that aspire to deliver holistic and impactful education cannot neglect this spiritual dimension. When teachers live as disciples of Christ, they will be able to lead their students to become Christlike as well. The results and discussion highlight the need for a paradigm shift in contemporary Christian education regarding teacher professionalism—one that goes beyond technical competence to emphasize spiritual depth, integrity of life, and the willingness to follow Christ authentically. Such teachers will be able to bring the values of the Gospel to life in the classroom, serve as a light to their students, and ultimately participate in fulfilling the Great Commission within the realm of education.

CONCLUSION

Contemporary Christian education faces complex and multidimensional challenges, not only in academic matters but also in spiritual and moral dimensions. Amid the rapid currents of societal change and the erosion of ethical and faith-based values, the role of Christian teachers has become increasingly vital as guardians of light and truth within the educational sphere. This study demonstrates that the professionalism of Christian teachers cannot be narrowly defined as mere technical competence or academic achievement; rather, it must be understood holistically as the integration of a faith calling, the character of Christ, and the ministry of education. In the context of Cahaya Bangsa School, teachers hold a strategic position as the vanguard in shaping a Christlike generation, and thus require formation that holistically addresses the spiritual, emotional, and pedagogical dimensions of their vocation.

The example of Jesus Christ, as portrayed in the Synoptic Gospels, serves as the primary foundation for shaping the identity and professionalism of Christian teachers. Jesus, the Great Teacher, was present not only as a verbal instructor but also as a living model whose example permeated every aspect of His disciples' lives. He taught with love, served with compassion, and shaped lives through His example. In the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, Jesus' teaching style is revealed to be relational, transformative, and filled with compassion, underscoring the importance of a holistic approach in Christian education. A Christian teacher who follows the example of Jesus will regard the teaching profession not merely as a job, but as a sacred calling to shape students into the likeness of Christ.

The findings also highlight a gap between the ideal vision of the Christian teaching vocation and the realities of professional practice. Many teachers experience spiritual fatigue, administrative pressures, and a lack of sustained spiritual formation, all of which diminish the quality of their example in ministry. This underscores the need for a system of professional development that not only addresses technical and academic aspects but also deepens spirituality and integrity of life. Christian schools must provide spaces for teachers to grow in faith, engage in theological reflection, and build communities that nurture their spiritual and emotional well-being. The implications of these findings affirm that the formation of Christian teacher professionalism cannot be separated from personal transformation rooted in an encounter with Christ. Teachers who live in intimate relationship with the Lord will naturally radiate love, patience, and integrity in every aspect of their teaching. When teachers serve as authentic role models, students will not only learn about Christ but will also experience Christ through their teachers' presence and ministry. Such Christian education does not merely transfer knowledge—it transforms lives. True Christian teacher professionalism is a reflection of a life continually renewed in the light of the Gospel. Christian schools that aspire to shape a generation that fears the Lord and reflects the character of Christ must place teacher formation as a top priority. The example of Jesus is not merely an inspiration, but a daily calling to be lived out. By making Christ the center of every educational process, Christian education becomes a field of ministry that produces an eternal impact on the world.

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