



Called to Teach, Inspire, and Fulfill the Great Commission: Implementing Matthew 28:19–20 in Christian Religious Education

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ABSTRACT

Christian Religious Education (CRE) plays a central role in fulfilling the Great Commission as recorded in Matthew 28:19–20. This commission is not merely a mandate to proclaim the Gospel, but also a divine calling to form disciples of Christ through a transformative teaching process. This study aims to explore how Christian educators can implement the calling to teach, inspire, and disciple the next generation through an educational approach grounded in the Word of God. Employing a qualitative-descriptive method and utilizing practical theology and reflective-narrative approaches, this research analyzes biblical texts such as Matthew 28:19–20, Ephesians 4:11–12, and 1 Timothy 4:12 to interpret the strategic role of CRE teachers in contemporary educational contexts. The findings indicate that teaching in CRE is an act of faith and a prophetic ministry that demands life exemplarity and moral integrity. Christian teachers serve as spiritual mentors who do not merely transmit theological knowledge but actively shape Christian character. Amid the challenges of globalization, digitalization, and moral decline, Christian education is called to holistically integrate faith and knowledge, thereby cultivating a generation that is not only intellectually competent but also spiritually grounded and missionally active in fulfilling the Great Commission. CRE is not simply an academic platform, but a strategic instrument for the transformation of both the Church and society.

Keywords: *Christian Religious Education, Great Commission, discipleship, Christian teacher*

INTRODUCTION

Christian Religious Education (CRE) holds a strategic and fundamental role in the life of the church and society, as it is an integral part of the Great Commission delivered by the Lord Jesus in Matthew 28:19–20. This mandate is not merely a call to carry out a global mission, but a sacred vocation for every believer to serve as a teacher, disciple-maker, and living example within society. In this context, CRE should not be narrowly understood as a classroom activity aimed solely at transferring theological knowledge; rather, it must be seen as a holistic process of human formation that encompasses spiritual, moral, social, and intellectual dimensions. Christian Religious Education serves as a platform for nurturing faith, strengthening character, and shaping individuals to live in accordance with God's will. The teaching process within CRE should provide an opportunity for

educators to lead students into a personal relationship with Christ, to understand His will, and to cultivate a lifestyle that reflects His love and truth in daily life. This calling becomes increasingly relevant in light of the rapidly changing realities of the present age, especially in the realms of technology, culture, and social life.

Advances in information technology today enable younger generations to access vast amounts of information; yet, ironically, they also create avenues for the infiltration of worldviews that contradict Christian values. In this era of digitalization, many students are exposed to relativism, where truth is regarded as subjective, determined by individual perspectives, without regard for the moral standards and absolute truth of God's Word. Furthermore, individualism has become deeply entrenched, eroding the spirit of community, mutual care, and the lived experience of spiritual values. Moral degradation poses an undeniable challenge for Christian educators, particularly in the context of a modern culture that tends to be permissive toward behaviors that deviate from the teachings of Christ. For this reason, CRE is called to serve as a stronghold of Christian values—a space of education that not only emphasizes intellectual capacity but also shapes young people to be individuals of character, integrity, and steadfast faith. Christian Religious Education must function as an agent of renewal that integrates faith and knowledge, enabling students to perceive every aspect of life as part of their service to God. It also serves as a contextual platform for discipleship, where students not only learn about Christ but are also trained to live in love, truth, and service.

Through a holistic approach, CRE is expected to raise a generation that is not only academically competent but also spiritually mature, socially sensitive, and courageous in being the light and salt of the world. Thus, Christian Religious Education stands as both an answer to the challenges of the age and a means of fulfilling the Great Commission of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Great Commission constitutes the final mandate of Jesus to His disciples before His ascension, as recorded in Matthew 28:19–20: *“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”* This passage has served as the theological foundation for the Christian mission, including its application within Christian education. According to Bosch (1991), the Great Commission is not merely a call to proclaim the Gospel but to make disciples of all nations. In this sense, the process of discipleship cannot be separated from educational activity; the teaching and character formation of disciples represent the practical outworking of the Great Commission. Carson (1995) further observes that the Greek verb *didaskontes* (“teaching them to obey”) carries a continuous aspect, signifying that Christ's mission in the world advances through consistent and faithful education.

Matthew 28:19–20 thus stands as a primary pillar of Christian Religious Education (CRE), containing three core imperatives: (1) the call to go, (2) the call to make disciples, and (3) the call to teach. Together, these elements form the missional and pedagogical basis for Christian educators, who serve not merely out of professional obligation but as an expression of lifelong devotion to Christ and His Church (Green, 2000).

The Meaning of the Teaching Vocation in the Christian Perspective

In the Christian tradition, teaching is not simply a professional or academic activity but a divine calling. Ephesians 4:11–12 affirms that Christ has appointed teachers as one of the

gifts within the Body of Christ, to equip the saints for the work of ministry. This underscores that educators in CRE carry both a spiritual mandate and a weighty responsibility before God. Palmer (1998) asserts that an authentic Christian teacher is not merely skilled in delivering content but also lives out the truths they teach, thereby becoming a living witness of Christ. He describes the teaching vocation as “an act of hospitality”—creating space for students to grow in faith and character. Similarly, Van Brummelen (2002) emphasizes that the ultimate aim of Christian education is to form disciples who reflect the image of Christ, not merely to produce competent graduates.

Christian Religious Education as a Process of Discipleship

Christian Religious Education is intended to go beyond doctrinal instruction. It is an integral component of discipleship—a process of spiritual, moral, and social formation in the light of the Gospel. Bonhoeffer (1937), in *The Cost of Discipleship*, stresses that authentic discipleship demands example, faithfulness, and integrity in living out Jesus’ teachings. Within the educational context, discipleship unfolds through the relational dynamic between teacher and student. The teacher is not merely an information provider but a spiritual mentor. Hendriks (2004) affirms that Christian teachers are disciple-makers, and the classroom is a place where mission is enacted. In this respect, CRE cannot be divorced from the mission of the Church, for both are carried out in the spirit of the Great Commission.

Inspiring Through Example: A Strategy for Faith Formation

Inspiration within the context of CRE arises from the teacher’s example. The Apostle Paul declares in 1 Corinthians 11:1, “*Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.*” This reveals the importance of teachers as role models in the spiritual life of their students. White (2000) highlights that Christian education is inherently formational in nature; when teachers live with integrity and perseverance in faith, students learn not only from the curriculum but also from their teacher’s way of life. Ricoeur (1995) describes this as a “living narrative,” in which the teacher’s life becomes a story that is read and internalized by students. When teachers demonstrate love, justice, and forgiveness in tangible ways, students encounter Christ in practical, experiential terms. Education that inspires is education that shapes the heart as well as the mind.

Christian Education and Contemporary Challenges

In the face of globalization, secularism, and rapid technological advancement, CRE confronts significant pressures. Research by the Barna Group (2018) reveals that young people today inhabit a highly pluralistic, digitally mediated world that is often antagonistic toward religion. This reality calls for a Christian education that is adaptive and creative, yet unwavering in its commitment to biblical truth. Smith and Denton (2005) note that many contemporary Christian teenagers exhibit a superficial faith—what they term “moralistic therapeutic deism”—rather than a relationally grounded faith in Christ. Consequently, CRE must adopt reflective, dialogical, and application-oriented pedagogies. Christian educators are called to serve as relevant spiritual companions, engaging contemporary questions without surrendering biblical authority. Kraus (2005) underscores the importance of integrating faith and learning so that students interpret all of life in the light of Christ. This aligns with Kuyper’s (1898) doctrine of *sphere*

sovereignty (soeveriniteit in eigen kring), which asserts that every sphere of life must be brought under the lordship of Christ. In this regard, CRE teachers are both guardians and guides in the shaping of a Christian worldview.

Implementing the Great Commission in the Context of CRE

The implementation of Matthew 28:19–20 within Christian Religious Education requires a strategy that integrates theological, pedagogical, relational, and missional dimensions. Theologically, CRE teachers must possess a deep understanding of Christian doctrine and be firmly grounded in the authority of Scripture. Pedagogically, instruction should be holistic and actively engage learners. Relationally, education must take place within nurturing communities, as exemplified by the early church (Acts 2:42–47). Missionally, students must be formed not merely to graduate but to live as witnesses of Christ in the world. Van Dyk (1997) affirms that true Christian education enables students to know who they are in Christ, to discern their calling in the world, and to act according to the values of the Gospel. In this light, CRE serves as an instrument of transformation—not only within the classroom, but also within families, churches, and the wider society.

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative-descriptive method with a practical theological and reflective-narrative approach. This approach was chosen for its capacity to explore the spiritual, theological, and pedagogical dimensions of Christian Religious Education (CRE), particularly in relation to the implementation of Matthew 28:19–20 within the context of educational ministry. The method aims not only to describe reality but also to engage in theological reflection on the foundations of Christian educational practice, thereby bridging the gap between the biblical text and contemporary educational practice. The research is grounded in a narrative inquiry that integrates educational and theological experiences into a unified process of reflection. Accordingly, the reflective-narrative approach is employed to examine the dynamics of the Christian educator's role in being called to teach, inspire, and fulfill the Great Commission. Reflection is undertaken through an in-depth reading and analysis of biblical texts, with Matthew 28:19–20 serving as the primary basis, alongside supporting passages such as Ephesians 4:11–12, 2 Timothy 2:2, and 1 Timothy 4:12. These texts are analyzed using an expository-theological method—carefully examining the meaning of the verses in order to grasp their intent, context, and implications for Christian educational practice.

The analysis begins with identifying key emerging themes: “teaching,” “inspiring,” and “fulfilling the Great Commission.” These themes are then mapped within both biblical and pedagogical frameworks. The theme of “teaching” is interpreted as a divine calling, not merely an academic activity but a spiritual responsibility. Inspiring is understood as the embodiment of exemplary living and transformative relationships between teacher and student. Meanwhile, fulfilling the Great Commission is interpreted as the mission of Christian education—not only to impart knowledge but to disciple and form Christian character.

Theological and pedagogical interpretations are then developed for each theme, tracing their significance within the history of the Church, traditions of Christian education, and present-day educational practice. This interpretation also considers their relevance to the global context and the contemporary challenges faced by education, such as

secularization, individualism, and technological advancement. The results of this analysis are used to conduct an implementation-focused reflection on the current state of Christian Religious Education. The purpose of this reflection is to determine how biblical principles can be meaningfully applied within the teaching process, curriculum design, teacher-student relationships, and character formation in Christian educational institutions. In doing so, the method facilitates a connection between Jesus' command in the Great Commission and its concrete expression in the classroom and church life, reinforcing the understanding that Christian education is an integral part of God's mission in the world.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In the context of Christian Religious Education (CRE), teaching is not merely an academic routine oriented toward the transmission of information; it is an act of faith born out of obedience to God's calling. Matthew 28:19–20 explicitly commands the disciples to go, make disciples of all nations, and teach them to obey everything Jesus has commanded. This mandate was not limited to the apostles of that time but is entrusted to every believer, including Christian educators today. Teaching, therefore, is a direct participation in discipleship, and discipleship lies at the heart of God's mission in the world. Consequently, every Christian teacher who teaches in faith and love for Christ is, in essence, fulfilling a divine mission.

Ephesians 4:11–12 further emphasizes that the role of the teacher is given by Christ Himself to equip the saints for the work of ministry and to build up the body of Christ. This indicates that a Christian teacher is not merely a conveyor of subject matter but also a shaper of spirituality, character, and life direction. The Christian educator serves as a facilitator of faith formation, not merely as a transmitter of doctrine. In this task, teachers are required to have a solid theological foundation, an expository grasp of God's Word, and a life that reflects the values of Christ. CRE instruction that is not grounded in a life aligned with Scripture will inevitably lose its moral and spiritual authority in the eyes of students. Moreover, teaching as an act of faith demands total commitment to the ministry of education. A CRE teacher must recognize that their presence in the classroom is not solely due to professional status but is an expression of obedience to God's call. When a teacher steps into the classroom, they carry not only knowledge but also the presence of Christ through example, prayer, and the values they embody. Thus, teaching is not merely a technical activity but an act of worship that leaves an eternal impact on students' lives. In today's increasingly complex and challenging world, the Christian educator must also function as an interpreter of the times—capable of viewing contemporary issues through the lens of Scripture and guiding students to understand reality in light of Christian principles. In this way, teaching in CRE is also a prophetic ministry—proclaiming God's will and bringing renewal within educational and societal contexts.

Inspiring through Example and Relationship

One of the most crucial aspects of Christian Religious Education is the teacher's ability to inspire students. This inspiration does not emerge solely from rhetorical skill or academic ability, but from an authentic life and meaningful relationships between teacher and learner. First Timothy 4:12 provides a clear standard: Christian teachers are to be

examples in speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity. Example is the most effective language in education, for students are more likely to imitate what they see than what they hear. Such example in CRE involves deep spirituality. Inspiring teachers are those who live prayerfully, exhibit love, demonstrate humility, and maintain moral integrity. Students who witness their teacher living in the love of Christ are naturally encouraged to emulate such a way of life. When teachers face personal struggles yet continue to display steadfast faith, these moments become the most powerful lessons.

Personal relationships between teacher and student also play a decisive role in learning effectiveness. Christian education is not only about the transfer of knowledge but also about the transfer of life. Relationships grounded in love and understanding create a safe, open, and empowering learning environment. In today's digital era, Christian teachers face both great challenges and unique opportunities in inspiring students. Technology can serve as a creative and relevant tool for conveying messages of faith. Yet a strong digital presence must be balanced with genuine digital integrity. A CRE teacher must be present not only physically in the classroom but also in the digital spaces where students spend much of their lives. Digital example becomes vital, for today's generation evaluates teachers not only by their classroom conduct but also by their online activities.

Inspiration also occurs when teachers are able to discern students' potential and personal needs. A teacher who is sensitive to students' emotional, spiritual, and social conditions will find it easier to build meaningful connections. In this regard, the teacher acts as mentor, counselor, and companion in the students' spiritual journey. Christian education that inspires will produce not only academically capable students but also believers who are firm in faith and courageous in influencing society.

Fulfilling the Great Commission through Education

From a Christian perspective, education is not merely an academic enterprise but a strategic avenue for fulfilling the Great Commission. Through Christ-centered learning, the CRE teacher enacts Jesus' command to make disciples of all nations. Discipleship cannot be separated from education, for the two mutually strengthen and merge in the goal of forming Christlike persons. In the classroom, the Christian teacher is engaged in disciple-making—not only in the cognitive sense but also in spiritual and ethical dimensions. Fulfilling the Great Commission through education requires a curriculum that not only teaches the content of the faith but also activates that faith in concrete action. Christian education must equip students to live as salt and light in the world (Matthew 5:13–16). Students formed through CRE should not only know the Gospel but also embody it—demonstrating it through lifestyle, moral choices, and service to others. In this regard, the Christian teacher becomes both coach and servant, guiding students to grow in Christ and preparing them to bear witness in the world.

In a broader context, the fulfillment of the Great Commission is not limited to CRE classes or theological schools. Every educational field is a mission field, and every academic discipline can be used to proclaim God's glory. Thus, Christian teachers in all fields are called to embody the values of the Kingdom of God in their teaching, attitudes, and interactions. Education becomes a strategic means of extending God's Kingdom when the truth and love of Christ are taught and lived out. Global challenges—such as moral decline, social conflict, environmental degradation, and poverty—demand a meaningful educational response. CRE bears the significant responsibility of addressing these

challenges through the formation of strong Christian character. Discipling education should encourage students to actively respond to the world's needs with wisdom and love. The Christian teacher, therefore, becomes a facilitator of social transformation rooted in the Gospel, making education a transformative tool that brings renewal across all areas of life.

Faith–Learning Integration as a Pillar of CRE

One of the hallmarks of Christian Religious Education is the integration of faith and learning. Colossians 2:3 declares that in Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. This means that all branches of knowledge ultimately converge in God's truth. Therefore, CRE must continually build bridges between the faith that is confessed and the knowledge that is learned, so that students do not experience a dualism between spiritual life and academic life. Faith–learning integration does not mean forcing Bible verses into every lesson, but rather developing a theological worldview that shapes how one perceives the world and life. For instance, in science, students can be led to marvel at the orderliness of God's creation; in history, they can be guided to recognize God's providence in the unfolding of nations; in the arts, they can be encouraged to express divine beauty. The Christian teacher serves as a guide in this process, helping students see the relationship between their faith and their field of study.

In practice, this integration must be reflected in curriculum, teaching methods, and assessment. A curriculum designed with theological awareness will provide space for faith reflection in various subjects. Dialogical and contextual teaching methods enable students to apply Christian values in real-life situations. Educational assessment should measure not only cognitive achievement but also growth in character and spirituality. The greatest challenge in faith–learning integration is maintaining balance. Overemphasis on faith may lead to the neglect of academic standards, while overemphasis on academics may cause CRE to lose its Christian distinctiveness. Thus, CRE teachers must continue to grow both in mastery of knowledge and in spiritual maturity, enabling them to serve as effective bridges for students in understanding the interconnection between faith and life.

This integration is also part of the Christian teacher's spiritual responsibility—to instill a Gospel-centered worldview in students. In a world dominated by relativism, students need a firm foundation for understanding truth, justice, and the meaning of life. By embedding Christian values within the framework of academic knowledge, the CRE teacher helps the younger generation become critical thinkers, reflective individuals, and responsible citizens of God's Kingdom.

CONCLUSION

Teaching, Inspiring, and Fulfilling the Great Commission are not three independent activities but rather an integrated whole that constitutes the essence of a Christian educator's calling. These three dimensions complement and strengthen one another within the divine vocation to educate, form, and disciple a generation that lives according to God's will. Matthew 28:19–20 is not merely an evangelistic directive; it is an ongoing mandate for education and discipleship that applies to every sphere of life, including the realm of education. In the context of Christian Religious Education (CRE), this passage serves as a solid foundation for every Christian teacher to carry out their mission with a

spirit of service, genuine love, and unwavering integrity. Christian Religious Education is not merely an academic forum where spiritual knowledge is taught cognitively; it is a transformative arena where the values of Christ are planted into the hearts and lives of students. CRE teachers are God's partners in the process of forming authentic disciples of Christ. Through teaching grounded in Scripture, a life that reflects God's love, and relationships that build up their students, teachers play a strategic role in manifesting the Kingdom of God within the educational sphere. In practice, Christian educators do not simply convey the content of the Bible—they themselves become living letters read by their students. The increasingly complex challenges of our time—moral crises, relativism of truth, boundless digitalization, and an individualistic lifestyle—demand that CRE teachers remain sensitive and adaptive to the realities faced by today's generation. Thus, Christian teachers must continually renew their faith commitment to remain steadfast in God's Word as the unchanging source of truth, while also being creative in designing engaging and contextually relevant teaching methods so that Christian values can be understood and lived out meaningfully in the students' contemporary context. The learning process must become a space where the truth of Scripture intersects with the dynamics of students' present lives.

The Great Commission is not to be delivered merely as theoretical instruction but as a lived and transmitted experience. Such an approach to education will produce disciples of Christ who possess not only spiritual knowledge but also character, spirituality, and the capacity to be salt and light in the world. They will not merely be church members but active participants in the Great Commission, expressing the love, justice, and truth of Christ in all spheres of life. CRE teachers must view themselves as integral participants in God's mission in the world. Through their teaching, they take part in shaping a civilization infused with the values of God's Kingdom. Through their example and dedication, Christian educators can be instruments used by God to fulfill the Great Commission in the midst of an ever-changing educational landscape. This is a noble calling to be embraced and lived faithfully, for through education, the Great Commission can be tangibly realized in the church, family, society, and the world at large.

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