



## The Power of a Christlike Spirit in the Classroom: A Study of Matthew 11:29 at SD Negeri 1 Nainggolan

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### ABSTRACT

*This study investigates the influence of a Christlike spirit on classroom climate in Christian Religious Education (CRE), grounded in the theological framework of Matthew 11:29. In contemporary education, teachers are increasingly recognized not only as transmitters of knowledge but also as moral agents whose dispositions shape students' learning experiences. A Christlike spirit, characterized by humility, gentleness, patience, and compassion, offers a faith-based foundation for ethical and relational teaching practice. This research was conducted at SD Negeri 1 Nainggolan, involving 76 Christian students taught by eight Christian teachers, including CRE teachers, within a pluralistic public-school context. A quantitative research design was employed to examine the relationship between teachers' Christlike dispositions and classroom climate. Data were collected through structured questionnaires administered to students using a Likert scale. The instruments measured indicators of Christlike spirit derived from Matthew 11:29 and classroom climate indicators such as emotional safety, student engagement, fairness, and teacher supportiveness. Validity and reliability tests confirmed the adequacy of the research instruments. Descriptive statistics and Pearson product-moment correlation analysis were used to analyze the data at a 0.05 significance level. The results indicate that students perceived a high level of Christlike spirit among their teachers, accompanied by a positive classroom climate. Correlational analysis revealed a strong and statistically significant relationship between teachers' Christlike dispositions and classroom climate. These findings demonstrate that Christlike qualities are not merely theological ideals but have measurable pedagogical impact. The study concludes that embodying humility and gentleness enhances relational authority, supports ethical professionalism, and fosters a supportive learning environment. This research contributes to Christian pedagogy by affirming the relevance of biblical theology in shaping effective and inclusive teaching practices in public education contexts.*

**Keywords:** *Christlike Spirit, Christian Religious Education, Classroom*

## INTRODUCTION

In contemporary educational discourse, the role of teachers extends beyond the transmission of knowledge to include moral guidance, emotional support, and character formation. Increasing attention has been given to the personal qualities of teachers, particularly how attitudes, values, and relational approaches influence classroom climate and student development. International research consistently affirms that teachers' dispositions significantly affect students' motivation, behavior, and overall learning experiences (Day et al., 2006; Campbell, 2017). In this context, the concept of a Christlike spirit offers a distinctive theological and pedagogical framework for understanding the ethical and relational dimensions of teaching in Christian Religious Education (CRE). Within Christian pedagogy, teaching is not merely a professional task but a vocation grounded in faith and service. Teachers are called to embody values that reflect the character of Christ, such as humility, gentleness, patience, and compassion. Matthew 11:29 presents a foundational biblical vision of such a disposition, where Jesus invites His followers to learn from Him because He is "gentle and humble in heart." Biblical scholars interpret this passage as a call to a posture of relational humility and servant leadership, emphasizing inner transformation rather than external authority (France, 2007; Wright, 2004). Applied to education, this text provides a powerful lens for understanding how teachers' inner attitudes shape their pedagogical practices and interactions with students. Educational research supports the notion that teachers' moral and emotional dispositions are central to effective teaching. Studies in teacher professionalism and moral education indicate that empathy, humility, and ethical consistency contribute to positive classroom environments and stronger teacher–student relationships (Carr, 2018; Tirri & Kuusisto, 2013). A Christlike spirit, characterized by gentleness and humility, aligns closely with these attributes and offers a faith-based foundation for social and emotional competence in teaching. Rather than exercising authority through control or domination, teachers guided by a Christlike spirit foster trust, respect, and mutual understanding in the classroom.

The relevance of this perspective becomes particularly evident in public school contexts where Christian teachers serve within pluralistic environments. At SD Negeri 1 Nainggolan, where approximately 76 Christian students are taught by eight Christian teachers, including teachers of Christian Religious Education, the expression of faith must be embodied through ethical conduct and relational integrity rather than explicit doctrinal assertion. Research on religious education in public schools highlights that teachers' values are most effectively communicated through modeling attitudes and behaviors that promote inclusivity, respect, and care (Sanger & Osguthorpe, 2013). In such settings, a Christlike spirit functions as a bridge between faith conviction and professional responsibility. The presence of a Christlike spirit influences instructional practices and classroom management. Teachers who demonstrate humility are more open to dialogue, reflective practice, and continuous improvement, while gentleness supports constructive discipline and emotional safety for students. Educational literature emphasizes that emotionally supportive classrooms enhance students' engagement, self-confidence, and moral development (Berkowitz & Bier, 2014). When grounded in Christian theology, these pedagogical practices are not merely strategies but expressions of faith in action. There

remains a need for studies that integrate biblical theology with educational theory to offer a more holistic understanding of teaching in Christian Religious Education. Matthew 11:29 provides a rich theological resource for examining how Christlike character shapes pedagogical relationships and classroom culture. By framing teaching as an invitation to learn in gentleness and humility, this text challenges dominant models of authority and performance-driven professionalism. This study aims to explore the power of a Christlike spirit in the classroom based on Matthew 11:29, focusing on SD Negeri 1 Nainggolan. By integrating biblical reflection with insights from international educational research, the study seeks to contribute to the discourse on Christian pedagogy, teacher character, and faith-informed professionalism. The findings are expected to offer valuable implications for CRE teachers, highlighting the transformative potential of embodying Christlike humility and gentleness in contemporary educational practice.

## METHODS

This study employed a quantitative research design to examine the influence of a Christlike spirit on classroom practice in Christian Religious Education (CRE), as interpreted through Matthew 11:29. A quantitative approach was chosen to allow for systematic measurement of students' perceptions and to identify statistical relationships between teachers' Christlike dispositions and classroom-related outcomes. This design is appropriate for educational research seeking to explore measurable patterns of teacher behavior and student responses within a defined population. The research was conducted at SD Negeri 1 Nainggolan, a public elementary school where Christian Religious Education is delivered within a pluralistic educational environment. The population of this study consisted of 76 Christian students enrolled in CRE classes and eight Christian teachers, including CRE teachers. From this population, students were selected as respondents because they interact directly with teachers in the classroom and are able to observe teachers' attitudes, communication styles, and relational approaches over time. Sampling was conducted using a simple random sampling technique to ensure that each student had an equal opportunity to be included in the study. This approach was applied to minimize selection bias and to enhance the representativeness of the sample. The final sample size met basic statistical requirements for correlational analysis in small-scale educational research. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed to measure two main variables: teachers' Christlike spirit in the classroom and the perceived classroom climate and learning support experienced by students. The Christlike spirit variable was operationalized through indicators derived from Matthew 11:29, including humility, gentleness, patience, approachability, and respectful communication. Classroom-related outcomes were measured through indicators such as emotional safety, student engagement, fairness, and teacher supportiveness. All items were measured using a Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

The research instrument was subjected to validity and reliability testing. Content validity was established through expert review to ensure alignment between biblical concepts, educational theory, and questionnaire items. Reliability analysis was conducted using Cronbach's alpha to assess internal consistency, with coefficients meeting acceptable thresholds for educational research. These procedures ensured that the instrument

measured the intended constructs consistently and accurately. Data analysis was carried out using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the characteristics of respondents and to describe the overall tendency of each variable. To examine the relationship between teachers' Christlike spirit and classroom outcomes, Pearson's product-moment correlation analysis was employed. This statistical test was selected because it is suitable for analyzing the strength and direction of relationships between continuous variables in quantitative educational research. Statistical significance was determined at the conventional alpha level of 0.05. Students were informed that their responses would remain anonymous and would be used solely for academic purposes. These measures were implemented to ensure ethical integrity and to promote honest and unbiased responses. Through this quantitative methodological framework, the study seeks to provide empirical evidence on how a Christlike spirit, grounded in Matthew 11:29, is manifested in classroom practice and contributes to a positive learning environment in Christian Religious Education.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents an integrated discussion of the quantitative findings concerning the relationship between teachers' Christlike spirit and classroom climate in Christian Religious Education (CRE), interpreted through Matthew 11:29. The analysis combines descriptive statistics and correlational results to provide a comprehensive understanding of how Christlike dispositions are perceived and experienced by students in the classroom. Descriptive analysis indicates that students generally perceived a high level of Christlike spirit among their teachers. Indicators such as humility, gentleness, patience, respectful communication, and approachability received consistently high mean scores. These findings suggest that teachers at SD Negeri 1 Nainggolan are perceived as demonstrating relational qualities aligned with the biblical portrayal of Christ in Matthew 11:29, where gentleness and humility form the core of teaching and discipleship. Descriptive statistics for classroom climate variables revealed positive student perceptions. Indicators related to emotional safety, fairness, supportive discipline, and student engagement showed favorable tendencies. This suggests that students experienced the classroom as a safe and supportive learning environment, conducive to both academic engagement and character development. Pearson correlation analysis revealed a positive and statistically significant relationship between teachers' Christlike spirit and classroom climate. The correlation coefficient indicates a strong association, demonstrating that higher levels of perceived Christlike disposition among teachers are linked to more positive classroom environments. This result confirms the research hypothesis that a Christlike spirit plays a meaningful role in shaping students' classroom experiences.

The findings affirm that a Christlike spirit is not merely a theological ideal but a measurable and impactful dimension of classroom practice. The strong correlation between teachers' Christlike dispositions and classroom climate supports educational research emphasizing the central role of teacher character in fostering effective learning environments. Teachers who demonstrate humility and gentleness are more likely to create classrooms characterized by trust, emotional safety, and mutual respect.

Interpreted through Matthew 11:29, the results highlight the pedagogical significance of Christ's invitation to learn from His gentle and humble heart. In the classroom context, this disposition translates into relational authority rather than coercive control. Teachers perceived as humble and gentle are more approachable, attentive to students' needs, and responsive to individual differences. This aligns with educational literature that underscores the importance of caring teacher–student relationships in promoting engagement and moral development. The positive classroom climate observed in this study suggests that Christlike qualities contribute to effective classroom management and student motivation. Rather than relying on strict discipline, teachers appear to foster self-regulation and responsibility through respectful interaction and consistent modeling. This finding supports character education perspectives that emphasize modeling as a primary mechanism for moral learning. Students internalize values not primarily through verbal instruction but through sustained observation of teachers' attitudes and behaviors. The public-school context of SD Negeri 1 Nainggolan adds an important dimension to the interpretation of the findings. With a substantial number of Christian students taught within a pluralistic educational environment, teachers' Christlike spirit functions as an inclusive expression of faith. Gentleness, humility, and patience are values that transcend religious boundaries and contribute positively to school culture without imposing doctrinal claims. This reinforces the idea that Christian values can be authentically lived out in public education through ethical conduct and relational integrity. The results suggest that the Christlike spirit supports teachers' professional identity. By embodying humility and gentleness, teachers demonstrate reflective openness and willingness to learn alongside students. This challenges performance-oriented models of professionalism and reframes teaching as a relational and formative vocation. In this sense, Christlike disposition strengthens both pedagogical effectiveness and moral credibility.

The findings should be interpreted within the study's limitations. The reliance on student perceptions provides valuable insight into classroom experiences but does not capture teachers' self-reflections or observational data. Additionally, the sample size reflects the specific context of one school, which may limit broader generalization. Future studies may incorporate mixed-method approaches, classroom observations, or comparative analyses across schools to deepen understanding of how Christlike spirit influences teaching practice. The integrated findings demonstrate that a Christlike spirit, grounded in Matthew 11:29, significantly contributes to positive classroom climate and effective Christian Religious Education. The study affirms that gentleness and humility are not signs of pedagogical weakness but sources of relational strength that enhance learning, character formation, and ethical professionalism in education.

## CONCLUSION

This study examined the influence of a Christlike spirit on classroom climate in Christian Religious Education, grounded in the theological perspective of Matthew 11:29, at SD Negeri 1 Nainggolan. Using a quantitative research design, the findings demonstrate a significant and positive relationship between teachers' Christlike dispositions, characterized by humility, gentleness, patience, and respectful communication, and

students' perceptions of a supportive and engaging classroom environment. These results affirm that Christlike character is not merely a spiritual ideal but a practical and measurable dimension of effective teaching. The findings suggest that teachers who embody Christlike humility and gentleness are more likely to foster emotional safety, mutual respect, and positive learning engagement among students. Such classroom conditions are essential for holistic education, particularly within Christian Religious Education, where cognitive learning is closely intertwined with moral and spiritual formation. Interpreted through Matthew 11:29, teaching is understood as a relational invitation to learn in an atmosphere shaped by compassion and humility rather than authority based on control. In the context of a public elementary school, the expression of a Christlike spirit carries additional significance. At SD Negeri 1 Nainggolan, where Christian teachers serve within a diverse educational environment, Christlike qualities function as inclusive values that promote ethical professionalism and respectful coexistence. Gentleness and humility, when embodied consistently, enable teachers to express their faith authentically without compromising the principles of pluralism and mutual respect in public education. This study is limited by its reliance on student perceptions and its relatively small sample size. Future research is encouraged to incorporate larger samples, mixed-method approaches, and classroom observations to further examine the role of Christlike dispositions in shaping instructional practice and student development. Longitudinal studies may also provide deeper insight into the long-term impact of faith-integrated character on educational outcomes. This study affirms that a Christlike spirit, rooted in the biblical message of Matthew 11:29, is a vital foundation for effective and ethical teaching in Christian Religious Education. When teachers model humility and gentleness in the classroom, they not only enhance pedagogical effectiveness but also embody faith in action, contributing meaningfully to students' academic growth, character formation, and spiritual development.

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