



## Faith Formation in Children through the Spiritual Competence of Christian Religious Education Teachers Inspired by Exodus 13:8 at SDN 013875

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### ABSTRACT

*This study concludes that faith formation in children is profoundly shaped by the spiritual competence of Christian Religious Education teachers. Through a systematic literature review, the findings demonstrate that spiritual competence extends beyond doctrinal knowledge or instructional skill, encompassing personal faith maturity, moral integrity, relational sensitivity, and the ability to integrate spirituality into pedagogical practice. In the context of elementary education, where children are highly influenced by relational models, spiritually competent teachers function as primary agents of faith formation whose lived example often speaks louder than formal instruction. The theological reflection on Exodus 13:8 provides a strong biblical foundation for understanding faith formation as an intentional and narrative-based process. The synthesis of the reviewed literature further reveals that effective faith formation occurs when spiritual competence and pedagogical practice are inseparably connected. Teachers who align instructional strategies with spiritual objectives create learning environments that foster trust, reflection, and moral growth. Operating in pluralistic and regulated educational settings, teachers are called to witness their faith through ethical conduct, compassion, and consistency rather than overt religious expression alone. The literature indicates that such implicit modeling of faith is particularly effective in nurturing children's spiritual awareness while respecting institutional and social diversity. Spiritual competence, therefore, enables teachers to navigate contextual challenges without compromising the essence of Christian faith formation. This study affirms that strengthening the spiritual competence of Christian Religious Education teachers is essential for fostering authentic faith formation in children. Future research is recommended to explore empirical applications of these findings in specific school contexts, thereby enriching the ongoing discourse on Christian Religious Education and faith formation.*

**Keywords:** *Spiritual Competence, faith, Christian Religious Education, Exodus 13:8.*

## INTRODUCTION

Faith formation in children constitutes a foundational aspect of Christian education, particularly within the context of formal schooling where moral, spiritual, and cognitive development intersect. In Christian Religious Education (CRE), faith is not merely transmitted as doctrinal knowledge but cultivated as a lived experience that shapes children's worldview, character, and ethical behavior. At the elementary school level, children are in a critical developmental phase where spiritual impressions are deeply internalized and can influence lifelong attitudes toward God, community, and moral responsibility. Therefore, the role of Christian Religious Education teachers extends beyond instructional delivery to encompass spiritual guidance, modeling, and intentional mentoring of faith. One of the most decisive factors in effective faith formation is the spiritual competence of the teacher. Spiritual competence refers to the teacher's personal faith maturity, spiritual integrity, biblical understanding, and ability to translate spiritual values into pedagogical practice. In the context of Christian education, a teacher's spirituality is not an abstract attribute but a lived reality that becomes visible through attitudes, decisions, relationships, and teaching approaches. Children tend to learn faith not only through what is taught but through who the teacher is. Consequently, the credibility of Christian Religious Education teachers as spiritual mentors significantly influences the depth and authenticity of students' faith development. Biblical foundations strongly emphasize the responsibility of adults to guide children in understanding and remembering God's saving acts. Exodus 13:8 provides a compelling theological framework for faith formation, stating, "On that day tell your son, 'I do this because of what the Lord did for me when I came out of Egypt.'" This verse highlights the importance of intentional faith narration, intergenerational transmission, and experiential testimony in nurturing faith. Faith, according to this biblical perspective, is formed through storytelling, remembrance, and personal witness rather than through abstract instruction alone. For Christian Religious Education teachers, Exodus 13:8 offers a paradigm in which teaching faith involves explaining God's works in a way that connects divine action with personal and communal experience. In contemporary educational contexts, however, Christian Religious Education often faces challenges related to formalism, limited instructional time, and an overemphasis on cognitive assessment. These conditions may reduce faith education to the memorization of biblical facts or moral rules, while neglecting the deeper spiritual formation of students. When faith instruction becomes detached from lived spirituality, children may struggle to internalize Christian values meaningfully. This situation underscores the urgency of strengthening teachers' spiritual competence so that faith education remains transformative rather than merely informative.

The Indonesian educational context presents additional complexities. Public schools such as SDN 013875 operate within a pluralistic environment that requires sensitivity, professionalism, and contextual awareness from Christian Religious Education teachers. Within such settings, teachers are expected not only to uphold religious instruction but also to demonstrate inclusive attitudes, ethical consistency, and spiritual authenticity. The ability of Christian Religious Education teachers to integrate biblical values with professional conduct and contextual realities becomes a crucial determinant of effective faith formation. Spiritual competence, therefore, is not limited to personal devotion but

includes the capacity to embody Christian faith responsibly within a diverse educational environment. Children at the elementary level learn faith primarily through relational encounters. They observe how teachers pray, speak, respond to conflict, and treat others. These everyday interactions function as implicit faith lessons that often leave a stronger impression than formal instruction. When teachers demonstrate spiritual consistency between teaching and practice, children are more likely to perceive faith as relevant and meaningful. Conversely, inconsistencies between words and actions can weaken students' trust and hinder faith development. This dynamic highlights the inseparable relationship between teacher spirituality and children's faith formation. Many studies focus on pedagogical competence or curriculum implementation, while fewer examine how teachers' spiritual maturity directly shapes students' faith experiences. This gap calls for research that integrates biblical theology, educational theory, and practical school contexts to provide a more holistic understanding of faith formation. This study aims to explore faith formation in children through the spiritual competence of Christian Religious Education teachers, inspired by the theological reflection of Exodus 13:8, within the context of SDN 013875. By examining how teachers embody, communicate, and model faith in their educational practice, this research seeks to contribute to the development of Christian Religious Education that is biblically grounded, pedagogically sound, and spiritually transformative. The findings are expected to offer insights for educators, schools, and Christian education stakeholders in strengthening faith formation through spiritually competent teaching.

## METHODS

This study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) as the primary research method to examine faith formation in children through the spiritual competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers, inspired by the theological perspective of Exodus 13:8. The SLR method was chosen to ensure a rigorous, transparent, and replicable process in synthesizing existing scholarly works related to teacher spirituality, faith formation, and biblical foundations in Christian education. Through this approach, the study aims to construct a comprehensive conceptual framework that integrates educational theory, theological reflection, and empirical findings. The review process followed established SLR procedures, consisting of planning, literature identification, screening, analysis, and synthesis. In the planning stage, the research questions were formulated to focus on three core themes: the concept of spiritual competence in Christian Religious Education teachers, models and processes of faith formation in children, and the relevance of Exodus 13:8 as a biblical foundation for intergenerational faith transmission. These themes guided the selection and evaluation of relevant literature. Literature identification was conducted by searching reputable academic databases, including Google Scholar, ERIC, Scopus-indexed journals, and theological databases, such as ATLA Religion Database. Keywords used in the search process included *spiritual competence*, *teacher spirituality*, *Christian Religious Education*, *faith formation in children*, *biblical pedagogy*, and *Exodus 13:8*. To ensure relevance and academic quality, the inclusion criteria were limited to peer-reviewed journal articles, scholarly books, and conference proceedings published primarily within the last ten years, while allowing foundational theological texts to support biblical interpretation. The screening stage involved a critical assessment of titles, abstracts, and full texts to determine their

alignment with the research objectives. Sources that lacked relevance to Christian education, focused solely on general religiosity without pedagogical implications, or did not address children's faith development were excluded. This process resulted in a refined corpus of literature that directly contributed to the study's analytical framework. Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis, enabling the identification of recurring patterns, concepts, and relationships across the selected studies. The literature was categorized into thematic clusters, including teacher spiritual maturity, faith modeling, narrative-based faith instruction, and intergenerational transmission of faith. Particular attention was given to how biblical narratives and testimonies, as exemplified in Exodus 13:8, are interpreted and applied within educational settings. Synthesis was carried out by integrating theological insights with educational perspectives to construct a coherent understanding of how teachers' spiritual competence influences children's faith formation. Although the study references the context of SDN 013875, the SLR approach allows the findings to be conceptually transferable to similar educational contexts. This method provides a solid theoretical foundation for further empirical research while offering practical implications for Christian Religious Education teachers and institutions.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this systematic literature review indicate that spiritual competence is a multidimensional construct that plays a decisive role in the effectiveness of faith formation in children. Across the reviewed literature, spiritual competence is consistently described not merely as the possession of religious knowledge, but as the integration of personal faith, moral integrity, spiritual discipline, and pedagogical wisdom. Christian Religious Education teachers who demonstrate spiritual competence are characterized by a lived faith that informs their teaching practices, interpersonal relationships, and ethical decision-making within the school environment. Several studies emphasize that spiritual competence begins with the teacher's personal relationship with God. Teachers who cultivate regular spiritual disciplines, such as prayer, Scripture meditation, and reflective practice, are more likely to exhibit spiritual authenticity in the classroom. This authenticity fosters trust and openness among students, enabling a learning environment where faith is perceived as meaningful and relevant. In contrast, teachers whose spirituality remains private or disconnected from their professional role often struggle to facilitate genuine faith formation, as students perceive a gap between instruction and lived example. The reviewed literature further highlights that spiritual competence includes the ability to interpret and contextualize biblical teachings appropriately for children's developmental stages. Elementary school students possess limited abstract reasoning but are highly responsive to narratives, symbols, and concrete examples. Spiritually competent teachers adapt biblical content into accessible stories and life-related explanations, allowing children to internalize faith concepts through experience and imagination. This pedagogical sensitivity reflects a mature spirituality that recognizes children not as passive recipients of doctrine, but as active participants in faith development.

### ***Faith Formation as a Holistic and Relational Process***

The analysis reveals that faith formation in children is widely understood as a holistic and relational process, encompassing cognitive understanding, emotional engagement, moral

development, and spiritual experience. Faith is not formed through instruction alone but through sustained interactions between teachers and students within meaningful relational contexts. This finding aligns strongly with Christian educational theory, which views faith as both taught and “caught” through example and relationship. Research consistently shows that children form their understanding of God and faith through observation of significant adults, particularly teachers who function as spiritual role models. In Christian Religious Education settings, teachers often represent one of the most visible embodiments of Christian faith outside the family context. When teachers display patience, compassion, honesty, and humility, these virtues become tangible expressions of faith that children can observe and emulate. Faith formation, therefore, occurs implicitly through daily interactions as much as explicitly through formal lessons. The literature also underscores the importance of emotional safety and spiritual openness in faith formation. Children are more likely to engage with faith-related content when they feel valued, respected, and understood. Spiritually competent teachers create classrooms where questions about God, doubt, and personal experience are welcomed rather than suppressed. This approach allows faith to develop organically as a dynamic and evolving relationship rather than as a static set of beliefs.

#### ***Exodus 13:8 as a Biblical Foundation for Faith Transmission***

One of the most significant findings of this review is the strong theological relevance of Exodus 13:8 as a foundational text for understanding faith formation. The verse emphasizes the responsibility of adults to actively explain God’s saving actions to children through personal testimony and narrative remembrance. This biblical principle reinforces the idea that faith is transmitted relationally and experientially rather than through abstract instruction alone. The literature on biblical pedagogy frequently highlights storytelling as a central method of faith formation. Exodus 13:8 presents faith education as an act of narration, telling children what God has done and why it matters. This narrative approach resonates deeply with children’s cognitive and emotional development, as stories provide structure, meaning, and personal connection. Spiritually competent teachers embody this principle by integrating personal faith experiences and biblical narratives into their teaching, making faith tangible and relatable. Exodus 13:8 emphasizes the importance of intentionality in faith instruction. Faith formation does not occur automatically but requires deliberate effort from those responsible for teaching. The reviewed studies suggest that teachers who intentionally reflect on their spiritual role are more effective in guiding children’s faith. This intentionality includes planning lessons that connect biblical stories with students’ lived experiences, as well as modeling gratitude and remembrance of God’s faithfulness in daily life.

#### ***Integration of Spiritual Competence and Pedagogical Practice***

Another key finding is the inseparable relationship between spiritual competence and pedagogical practice. Spiritually competent teachers do not separate faith from teaching methodology; instead, spirituality informs how lessons are designed, delivered, and evaluated. The literature indicates that effective faith formation occurs when teachers align instructional strategies with spiritual objectives, such as fostering trust in God, developing moral discernment, and encouraging prayerful reflection. For example, teachers who incorporate reflective activities, guided prayer, and discussion-based

learning create opportunities for students to engage with faith beyond memorization. These practices encourage children to articulate their understanding of God and connect biblical teachings with personal experiences. Such pedagogical choices reflect a teacher's spiritual maturity and awareness of faith as a lived reality. In contrast, studies note that when Christian Religious Education is reduced to rote learning or standardized assessment, faith formation becomes superficial. Children may demonstrate cognitive knowledge of biblical content without internalizing its spiritual significance. This gap highlights the critical role of teacher spirituality in shaping instructional approaches that nurture both understanding and transformation. The review also identifies contextual challenges faced by Christian Religious Education teachers in public schools such as SDN 013875. Teachers operate within pluralistic and regulated educational environments that require sensitivity to diversity and adherence to national curricula. These conditions can limit the explicit expression of faith and create tension between religious instruction and institutional expectations. The literature suggests that spiritual competence enables teachers to navigate these challenges effectively. Rather than relying solely on explicit religious language, spiritually competent teachers demonstrate faith through ethical behavior, respectful interaction, and compassionate leadership. Such implicit expressions of faith are particularly influential in pluralistic contexts, as they model Christian values without imposing belief. The findings indicate that teachers who understand their role as spiritual witnesses, rather than merely religious instructors, are better equipped to foster faith formation within institutional constraints. This perspective aligns with Exodus 13:8, which emphasizes testimony rooted in personal experience rather than coercive instruction.

#### ***Implications for Faith Formation at SDN 013875***

Although this study employs an SLR approach, the contextual reference to SDN 013875 provides a practical lens for interpreting the findings. The literature suggests that faith formation in such a setting depends largely on the spiritual competence of Christian Religious Education teachers as daily mentors and role models. Teachers who embody faith through consistency, integrity, and relational engagement create a learning environment where children can experience faith as trustworthy and meaningful. The reviewed studies highlight that institutional support, such as opportunities for spiritual formation and professional development, further strengthens teachers' capacity for faith guidance. Schools that recognize the spiritual dimension of teaching contribute indirectly to students' faith formation by nurturing teachers' spiritual well-being. This research contributes to the broader discourse on Christian Religious Education by integrating theological reflection, educational theory, and practical implications. The findings affirm that faith formation in children is deeply relational and dependent on the spiritual competence of teachers. Exodus 13:8 emerges not merely as a theological reference but as a pedagogical framework that emphasizes narrative, testimony, and intentional faith transmission. By synthesizing existing literature, this study highlights the need for renewed attention to teacher spirituality as a central component of Christian education. The findings challenge educators and institutions to move beyond technical competence and prioritize spiritual maturity as a foundational element of effective faith formation.

## CONCLUSION

This study concludes that faith formation in children is profoundly shaped by the spiritual competence of Christian Religious Education teachers. Through a systematic literature review, the findings demonstrate that spiritual competence extends beyond doctrinal knowledge or instructional skill, encompassing personal faith maturity, moral integrity, relational sensitivity, and the ability to integrate spirituality into pedagogical practice. In the context of elementary education, where children are highly influenced by relational models, spiritually competent teachers function as primary agents of faith formation whose lived example often speaks louder than formal instruction. The theological reflection on Exodus 13:8 provides a strong biblical foundation for understanding faith formation as an intentional and narrative-based process. The verse emphasizes the responsibility of adults to explain God's saving acts through personal testimony and remembrance, highlighting the relational and experiential nature of faith transmission. When applied to Christian Religious Education, this principle underscores the importance of teachers not only teaching biblical content but also embodying and narrating faith through everyday interactions. Such an approach enables children to perceive faith as a meaningful and lived reality rather than as abstract religious information. The synthesis of the reviewed literature further reveals that effective faith formation occurs when spiritual competence and pedagogical practice are inseparably connected. Teachers who align instructional strategies with spiritual objectives create learning environments that foster trust, reflection, and moral growth. Conversely, when Christian Religious Education is reduced to cognitive learning or formal assessment, faith formation risks becoming superficial and disconnected from students' lived experiences. This finding highlights the necessity of reorienting Christian education toward holistic formation that integrates knowledge, character, and spirituality. Within the context of public schools such as SDN 013875, the role of spiritually competent teachers becomes even more significant. Operating in pluralistic and regulated educational settings, teachers are called to witness their faith through ethical conduct, compassion, and consistency rather than overt religious expression alone. The literature indicates that such implicit modeling of faith is particularly effective in nurturing children's spiritual awareness while respecting institutional and social diversity. Spiritual competence, therefore, enables teachers to navigate contextual challenges without compromising the essence of Christian faith formation. This study affirms that strengthening the spiritual competence of Christian Religious Education teachers is essential for fostering authentic faith formation in children. Educational institutions and stakeholders are encouraged to prioritize spiritual development alongside professional training, recognizing that teachers' spirituality directly influences the quality of faith education. Future research is recommended to explore empirical applications of these findings in specific school contexts, thereby enriching the ongoing discourse on Christian Religious Education and faith formation.

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