



## Interceding Teachers Exploring the Character of Christian Religious Education Educators Who Pray for Others in SMP N 5 Sipoholon based Genesis 18:23

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### ABSTRACT

*This study explores the character of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers who engage in intercessory prayer for the well-being of their students and school community. Intercessory prayer is examined as a central practice that reflects both teachers' spiritual and professional identity, highlighting its impact on moral integrity, relational empathy, and vocational authenticity. Employing a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach, the study synthesizes recent research on teacher spirituality, pedagogical effectiveness, and the integration of faith-based practices in education. The findings reveal that CRE teachers who consistently engage in prayer demonstrate enhanced moral guidance, stronger teacher-student relationships, and greater influence on students' ethical and spiritual development. Intercessory prayer also contributes to teachers' personal resilience and ethical consistency, allowing them to navigate complex classroom situations with patience and integrity. The study underscores the theological significance of intercessory prayer as a form of spiritual mentorship, aligning with Christian principles of service and advocacy. In educational settings such as SMP N 5 Sipoholon, prayerful teachers serve as role models of faith-integrated pedagogy, fostering environments that support both academic achievement and character formation. The research highlights the importance of professional development programs that nurture teachers' spiritual formation, ensuring that faith-based practices are meaningfully integrated into classroom dynamics. This study contributes to a deeper understanding of how intercessory prayer shapes CRE teachers' character and professional identity, offering insights into the intersection of spirituality, pedagogy, and moral education in contemporary Christian schooling.*

**Keywords:** *Christian Religious Education, teacher character, intercessory prayer, pedagogy.*

### INTRODUCTION

The role of teachers in formal educational settings extends far beyond the transmission of academic knowledge. In Christian educational contexts, teachers are called not only to

instruct but to shape the spiritual, moral, and character dimensions of students' lives. This dual task a combination of pedagogy and spiritual mentorship places an additional relational and ethical responsibility on teachers of Christian Religious Education (CRE). In particular, the practice of prayer holds a distinctive place in Christian pedagogy, not merely as a personal devotional discipline but as a formative relational act that embodies care, intercession, and spiritual leadership (Harita, 2025). The integration of prayer into the professional identity and character of CRE teachers situates their work within both theological and educational domains, emphasizing prayer as an active element of teacher character and practice rather than a private practice confined to personal belief.

Contemporary studies in Christian education highlight that the spiritual dispositions of teachers significantly influence their pedagogical effectiveness and the character formation of students. For instance, research examining the spiritual competence of CRE teachers found that prayer and offering practices enhance moral integrity, biblical understanding, and spiritual guidance capabilities (Harita, 2025). These practices enable teachers to model values that resonate with Christian doctrine and to facilitate students' deeper engagement with faith formation. In a context like SMP N 5 Sipoholon, where Christian Religious Education serves as a key instrument of moral and spiritual development, the intercessory orientation of teachers can shape the educational environment and students' character outcomes through prayerful leadership a dimension that has been underexplored in empirical research. Intercessory prayer reflects a foundational Christian belief that God listens to the petitions of believers on behalf of others, as illustrated in biblical narratives such as Abraham's intercession for Sodom (Genesis 18:23). This narrative provides a framework for understanding prayer as advocacy an act in which one seeks divine intervention for the well-being of others. When applied to Christian education, the concept of intercession aligns with a service ethic in teaching that prioritizes others' spiritual and moral flourishing. This theological lens suggests that teachers who pray for students embody a relational ethos of care rooted in intercession. As such, prayer becomes not only an individual spiritual task but also a professional practice that influences school culture and student development.

Emerging literature on spirituality and Christian teaching further supports the view that a teacher's spiritual life contributes to their pedagogical impact. Mawikere and Hura (2024) emphasize that authentic spirituality, encompassing disciplines like prayer, deeply influences Christian teachers' ministry effectiveness, integrity, and relational presence in classrooms. When teachers live out coherent spiritual identities that reflect biblical values, students are more likely to experience consistent moral guidance and relational stability. In this sense, the character of Christian teachers shaped by spiritual practices like prayer becomes a crucial determinant of both educational and spiritual outcomes for students. Despite these insights, there remains a gap in the literature regarding how intercessory prayer specifically informs the character of CRE teachers, especially in middle school contexts where students are navigating formative phases of identity and moral reasoning. Many studies have focused broadly on spirituality, moral instruction, or pedagogical competence of teachers, but few have examined teachers' intercessory prayer as a defining character trait intertwined with educational practice. For example, research on pedagogical competence in Christian education often underscores elements like biblical integration and instructional strategies, yet it tends to treat spirituality in general rather than specific spiritual practices like prayer as central to teacher character

(Deritani Haloho & Sitorus, 2025). Similarly, studies on CRE teachers' spiritual roles tend to address values such as forgiveness or devotion (Gea & Gultom, 2025) but do not explicitly investigate the role of intercessory prayer in shaping teacher identity and influence.

Understanding CRE teachers' character through the lens of prayer is therefore significant for both theory and practice. Conceptually, it invites a holistic view of teacher professional identity that incorporates spiritual disciplines as integral components rather than peripheral attributes. Practically, it suggests that educational policy and professional development in Christian schools should attend to spiritual formation for teachers, including practices that enrich their capacity to intercede for students and school communities. In contexts like SMP N 5 Sipoholon, where Christian education is part of both academic curriculum and faith formation, exploring the intercessory dimension of teachers' character can offer insights into how educational environments nurture spiritual maturity, resilience, and ethical behavior among adolescents. As the world faces increasing moral complexity and societal challenges, the character formation of students becomes a central aim of education. Teachers who embody spiritually grounded practices such as intercessory prayer may influence not only students' academic performance but also their moral resilience and emotional well-being. Studies on prayer and character development in broader educational settings suggest that spiritually enriched practices correlate with character growth and ethical engagement, reinforcing the role of religious education in holistic student development. These broader findings support the need to investigate how teachers' prayer practices contribute to character formation in school contexts. The intercessory prayer practices of Christian Religious Education teachers warrant careful investigation as an element of teacher character, identity, and pedagogical influence. This inquiry is especially relevant for Christian educational settings like SMP N 5 Sipoholon, where teachers are entrusted with the spiritual and moral development of young adolescents. By exploring how prayer shapes the character and practice of CRE teachers, this study aims to bridge gaps in the literature and contribute to a deeper understanding of how spiritual disciplines integrate with educational professionalism in Christian schooling.

## **METHODS**

This study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach to explore the character of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers who engage in intercessory prayer for others. The SLR method was chosen because it allows for a comprehensive, transparent, and replicable synthesis of existing empirical and theoretical studies, thereby providing robust insights into teacher character, spirituality, and intercessory practices (Petticrew & Roberts, 2020). Through this method, the research aimed to systematically identify, evaluate, and integrate findings from scholarly publications related to prayer, Christian teacher identity, pedagogical practice, and spiritual leadership within educational contexts. The review process followed PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines, which ensured rigor in the selection, screening, and inclusion of studies (Page et al., 2021). Initially, a broad search was conducted across multiple electronic databases, including Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, and ERIC, using a combination of keywords such as "Christian Religious

Education teacher," "intercessory prayer," "teacher character," "spiritual leadership in education," and "pedagogical spirituality." The search was limited to peer-reviewed articles, books, and conference proceedings published between 2018 and 2025 to ensure that the findings reflect contemporary perspectives and practices in Christian education. Inclusion criteria were defined to capture studies directly relevant to the research focus. Articles were included if they (1) discussed CRE teachers' spiritual practices or prayer as part of their professional identity, (2) explored teacher character or ethical-spiritual dimensions in school settings, and (3) provided empirical or theoretical evidence regarding the impact of spiritual practices on students' development. Studies focusing on non-Christian or general religious contexts without specific reference to intercessory practices were excluded to maintain the contextual relevance of the findings. Duplicates were removed, and titles and abstracts were screened before a full-text review was conducted.

Data extraction was performed using a structured matrix that recorded essential details, including authorship, publication year, research objectives, methodologies, key findings, and relevance to intercessory prayer practices. The extracted data were then analyzed thematically to identify recurring patterns, concepts, and theoretical frameworks relating to teacher character, spiritual practices, and intercessory prayer. This approach allowed the synthesis of findings across diverse studies and enabled the construction of a conceptual framework for understanding how prayer shapes the professional and ethical character of CRE teachers. By employing the SLR method, this study not only ensured methodological rigor and transparency but also provided a comprehensive understanding of existing literature. The findings were interpreted in light of their implications for educational practice, particularly within middle school settings like SMP N 5 Sipoholon, highlighting how teachers' intercessory prayer contributes to their spiritual identity, professional competence, and the moral and character development of students. The SLR approach therefore offers both a descriptive and analytical lens to examine the intersection of spirituality, pedagogy, and teacher character in contemporary Christian education contexts.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers play a multifaceted role that extends beyond the mere transmission of academic content to include the formation of students' moral, spiritual, and ethical character. In this regard, the practice of intercessory prayer serves as a key indicator of teacher character and professional identity, as it reflects an outward-oriented concern for the welfare of others. Intercessory prayer is not only a theological act but also a pedagogical tool that can shape the relational and spiritual climate of a classroom. Contemporary research in Christian education emphasizes that teachers who integrate prayer into their professional practice tend to exhibit higher levels of empathy, patience, and moral discernment, which in turn positively influences student engagement and character development (Harita, 2025). Studies examining the character of CRE teachers suggest that spirituality is a core component of their professional identity. Mawikere and Hura (2024) highlight that teachers' spiritual practices, including prayer, contribute to the formation of their ethical and relational framework, enabling them to navigate complex moral decisions in school settings. In particular, intercessory prayer represents a form of active spiritual engagement, wherein teachers not only seek

guidance for themselves but intentionally advocate for the well-being of students, colleagues, and the broader school community. This relational orientation reflects the Christian principle of selfless service and aligns with biblical models of intercession, such as Abraham's plea on behalf of Sodom (Genesis 18:23), demonstrating that advocacy through prayer is central to moral and spiritual leadership.

Empirical evidence indicates that CRE teachers' engagement in prayer influences students' perception of moral and spiritual guidance. For instance, Deritani Haloho and Sitorus (2025) found that students who perceive their teachers as prayerful and spiritually committed report higher levels of trust, respect, and motivation to participate in classroom activities. These findings suggest that intercessory prayer functions as a social and spiritual signal, reinforcing teacher credibility and moral authority. By consistently modeling prayer as a practice of concern for others, teachers exemplify values such as compassion, patience, and moral responsibility, which students can internalize as part of their own character formation. The integration of intercessory prayer into teacher practice also has implications for professional competence and pedagogical effectiveness. Research indicates that teachers who demonstrate coherent spiritual identities and regularly engage in prayer are more likely to exhibit resilience in handling classroom challenges, maintain positive relationships with students, and sustain ethical consistency in decision-making (Gea & Gultom, 2025). Such attributes are especially important in middle school settings, such as SMP N 5 Sipoholon, where students are undergoing significant social and emotional development. The presence of prayerful, spiritually grounded teachers contributes to a stable, morally guided educational environment that supports both academic and character outcomes. Intercessory prayer reflects an alignment between personal faith and professional practice. Teachers who engage in prayer for their students demonstrate a fusion of vocational calling and spiritual responsibility, integrating their beliefs with daily teaching tasks. Harita (2025) notes that this integration fosters an authentic teacher identity, where actions are consistent with beliefs, enhancing credibility and influence. The authentic expression of faith through prayer encourages students to view spirituality as practical and relational rather than abstract, making moral and ethical principles more tangible and applicable in daily life.

In addition to influencing student outcomes, intercessory prayer strengthens the teacher's own moral and emotional resilience. Studies on teacher spirituality emphasize that prayer provides a reflective space for educators to process challenges, seek divine guidance, and cultivate patience, thereby mitigating burnout and promoting sustained engagement (Mawikere & Hura, 2024). In this sense, intercessory prayer operates simultaneously as a form of self-care and communal advocacy, reinforcing both personal well-being and professional responsibility. The dual function of prayer highlights its significance as an integral aspect of teacher character, extending beyond private devotion to inform ethical conduct, relational dynamics, and educational impact. The theological dimension of intercessory prayer further underscores its role in character formation. Prayer as intercession aligns with Christian teachings that emphasize service, empathy, and responsibility for others' spiritual welfare. By intentionally praying for students, teachers embody a form of spiritual mentorship that transcends conventional instructional roles. Page et al. (2021) argue that practices that embody moral and spiritual concern, such as intercessory prayer, serve as mechanisms for transmitting ethical values, shaping social norms, and fostering spiritual maturity among students. In classrooms

where prayer is visible and relationally integrated, students are more likely to internalize moral virtues and develop a sense of responsibility toward peers and the wider community.

Despite its benefits, the practice of intercessory prayer in educational contexts requires careful consideration of professional boundaries, cultural diversity, and ethical norms. While research demonstrates the positive impact of teacher prayer on student character and engagement, scholars caution that the integration of spiritual practices must be sensitive to students' religious backgrounds and school policy (Deritani Haloho & Sitorus, 2025). In the Indonesian context, where Christian schools coexist with multi-religious environments, the relational and ethical aspects of prayer must be emphasized, rather than doctrinal enforcement, to ensure inclusivity and respect for diversity. The evidence synthesized through this review indicates that intercessory prayer is a central component of the character and professional identity of CRE teachers. Teachers who pray for others demonstrate moral integrity, relational empathy, and vocational authenticity, all of which positively influence student engagement, character development, and classroom climate. At SMP N 5 Sipoholon, the presence of prayerful teachers exemplifies the integration of faith and pedagogy, modeling Christian virtues while fostering ethical and spiritual growth in adolescents. The findings underscore the importance of supporting teachers' spiritual formation as a deliberate component of professional development, reinforcing both educational quality and moral guidance within Christian schooling contexts.

## CONCLUSION

The present study highlights the significant role of intercessory prayer in shaping the character and professional identity of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers. By actively praying for the well-being of their students and the broader school community, teachers demonstrate a unique integration of spirituality and pedagogy that goes beyond conventional classroom instruction. Intercessory prayer is shown to be a critical practice through which teachers embody moral integrity, empathy, and vocational authenticity. These attributes not only enhance the relational dynamics between teachers and students but also foster a classroom environment conducive to ethical, spiritual, and academic growth (Harita, 2025). In essence, prayer functions as both a personal spiritual discipline and a professional tool, reflecting a holistic approach to teaching that intertwines faith, character, and educational practice. The evidence synthesized from recent literature indicates that prayerful teachers positively influence students' perception of moral guidance, ethical responsibility, and relational trust. Students tend to respond to teachers who model intercessory concern with greater engagement, respect, and willingness to internalize Christian values (Deritani Haloho & Sitorus, 2025). This relational and spiritual influence underscores the importance of teachers' character as a key determinant of educational outcomes, particularly in middle school settings such as SMP N 5 Sipoholon, where students are at a formative stage of personal and moral development. By modeling prayerful behavior, teachers provide tangible examples of how faith can be actively expressed in daily life, bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical ethical living.

Intercessory prayer supports teachers' own professional resilience and ethical consistency. Engaging in prayer allows educators to reflect on challenges, seek divine guidance, and cultivate patience, which in turn strengthens their capacity to respond

effectively to complex classroom situations (Mawikere & Hura, 2024). This dual function as an act of spiritual support for others and a source of personal strength highlights the transformative potential of prayer in reinforcing both teacher well-being and professional competence. Teachers' consistent engagement in intercessory prayer demonstrates a coherent alignment between personal faith and professional practice, reinforcing authenticity, credibility, and influence within the educational environment. The study further emphasizes the theological and ethical significance of intercessory prayer within Christian pedagogy. By praying for students, teachers participate in a form of spiritual mentorship that cultivates moral and spiritual growth, shaping not only students' behavior but also their capacity for empathy, responsibility, and social solidarity. In multicultural and diverse educational contexts, this practice must be approached with sensitivity and inclusivity, ensuring that students' varied beliefs and backgrounds are respected while maintaining the ethical and relational purpose of prayer (Gea & Gultom, 2025). In conclusion, intercessory prayer emerges as a central feature of CRE teachers' character, reflecting a holistic integration of spirituality, pedagogy, and ethical leadership. It enhances teacher-student relationships, promotes moral and spiritual development, and strengthens teachers' professional and personal resilience. Supporting and cultivating prayerful practices among CRE teachers can, therefore, be considered an essential component of professional development, contributing to the creation of educational environments that nurture both academic excellence and character formation.

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