



## Christian Religious Education Teachers as Models of Honesty Insights from Exodus 20:17 in SDN 095153 Tambun Boras

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### ABSTRACT

*Honesty is a fundamental value in moral and spiritual development, and Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers play a crucial role in modeling this virtue for students. This study explores how CRE teachers at SDN 095153 Tambun Boras embody honesty as a spiritual and ethical principle, drawing insights from Exodus 20:17. Employing a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) methodology, this research synthesizes recent empirical and theoretical studies on teacher modeling, moral education, and the integration of biblical teachings into classroom practice. The findings indicate that CRE teachers' personal integrity, reflective practice, and consistent demonstration of honesty significantly influence students' moral development, ethical reasoning, and spiritual growth. By integrating scriptural insights with practical classroom strategies, teachers create an environment where honesty is both taught and lived, fostering trust, fairness, and social responsibility among elementary students. Moreover, the study highlights the importance of professional development and theological training in equipping teachers to navigate ethical challenges while maintaining authenticity and alignment between belief and practice. The results underscore that modeling honesty is not only a pedagogical imperative but also a spiritual mandate, contributing to the holistic formation of morally responsible and spiritually grounded learners. This research provides valuable implications for teacher training, curriculum design, and school policies aimed at promoting ethical education in multicultural and multireligious settings.*

**Keywords:** *Christian Religious Education, honesty, teacher modeling, Exodus 20:17.*

### INTRODUCTION

Honesty is a foundational value that underpins not only personal character but also the moral fabric of society. In educational settings, teachers play a critical role in modeling and transmitting ethical values to students, serving not only as instructors of academic content but also as exemplars of moral conduct. This role is particularly significant in Christian Religious Education (CRE), where the integration of spiritual teachings with daily life behaviors is central to holistic student development. Teachers of Christian Religious

Education have the unique responsibility of embodying Christ-centered virtues such as honesty, integrity, and moral courage, and in doing so, fostering an environment where students learn to internalize and live out these virtues themselves (Smith, 2021). In the context of SDN 095153 Tambun Boras, a public elementary school in Indonesia, the imperative for CRE teachers to model honesty gains added complexity due to Indonesia's multicultural and multireligious setting, where moral education intersects with religious plurality and national educational goals. Theological foundations for honesty in Christian teaching are deeply rooted in biblical texts, with Exodus 20:17 "You shall not covet..." serving as a key reference point in discussions of moral desire, respect for others, and the internal disposition of honesty (Brown, 2022). While Exodus 20:17 is traditionally viewed within the Decalogue as a prohibition against covetousness, contemporary theologians argue that it also implicates honesty at the level of thought, intention, and behavior, linking inner moral integrity with outward ethical action (Johnson, 2020). This integrated perspective underscores that honesty is not only about refraining from blatant falsehoods but also about cultivating a heart attuned to truth, respect, and humility qualities essential for healthy interpersonal relationships and community life. In educational contexts, this means that teachers must exemplify honesty not only in how they communicate facts but also in how they handle interpersonal trust, fairness in assessment, and respect for students' dignity (White & Lee, 2023). Research in educational ethics highlights that the modeling of honesty by teachers significantly influences students' moral development. Studies reveal that students emulate behaviors demonstrated by authority figures; when teachers consistently practice honesty, students are more likely to adopt honest behaviors themselves, leading to positive outcomes in academic integrity and social interactions (Martinez, 2021). For example, honesty in grading practices, transparency in communication, and equitable treatment of students are associated with higher levels of student trust, increased academic motivation, and lower incidences of cheating or dishonest conduct among elementary pupils (Nguyen, 2022). Furthermore, moral modeling by teachers contributes to students' internalization of ethical norms, strengthening their capacity for self-regulated moral reasoning beyond the classroom (Kaur & Singh, 2021).

Indonesia's education system emphasizes character education as a national priority, aiming to nurture students who are not only academically competent but also morally upright (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2024). Christian Religious Education, while situated within this broader national agenda, must navigate the particularities of teaching spiritual values in a religiously diverse environment, ensuring that ethics are presented in ways that respect pluralism while remaining true to Christian doctrinal teachings. At SDN 095153 Tambun Boras, CRE teachers are tasked with the dual challenge of upholding Christian moral principles and fostering an inclusive classroom climate that honors the dignity of all students, irrespective of their religious backgrounds. Teachers' personal integrity is an essential component of effective moral education; students are quick to discern inconsistencies between what teachers preach and how they behave (Rivers & Banks, 2023). When CRE teachers act as genuine models of honesty demonstrating truthfulness in their words, fairness in their conduct, and accountability in their professional roles they create a moral climate that supports students in developing trustworthy character traits. Conversely, when ethical lapses occur, students may internalize mixed messages that weaken the value of honesty as a normative standard.

This underscores the importance of intentional professional development for CRE teachers that strengthens both their theological understanding of honesty and their pedagogical strategies for modeling ethical behavior in classroom practice (Thompson, 2022). The current study explores the lived experiences of Christian Religious Education teachers at SDN 095153 Tambun Boras in modeling honesty, drawing on insights from Exodus 20:17 as a theological anchor for understanding honesty within Christian moral formation. By examining how teachers integrate scriptural teachings with practical classroom behaviors, this research seeks to illuminate the dynamics between religious values, teacher identity, and student moral development. Such exploration is necessary not only for contributing to the scholarship on moral education but also for providing grounded recommendations for teacher training, curriculum design, and school policies that reinforce ethical values in elementary education contexts. Modeling honesty in Christian Religious Education is not merely about transmitting abstract moral principles but about embodying truth in daily interactions and professional practice. Through this study, we aim to articulate how CRE teachers at SDN 095153 Tambun Boras understand and operationalize honesty, elucidating the ways in which biblical insights from Exodus 20:17 inform their pedagogical and ethical choices. This investigation contributes to a deeper understanding of moral role modeling in education and affirms the centrality of teacher identity in nurturing students' ethical development within diverse educational settings.

## METHODS

This study employs a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach to investigate the role of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers as models of honesty, drawing insights from Exodus 20:17 within the context of elementary education at SDN 095153 Tambun Boras. A systematic literature review allows researchers to synthesize and critically evaluate existing empirical and theoretical studies, providing a comprehensive understanding of the topic while minimizing bias in the selection and interpretation of sources (Peters et al., 2022). SLR is particularly suitable for examining the intersection of religious pedagogy, moral education, and teacher modeling of ethical behaviors, as it enables an evidence-based aggregation of studies across diverse educational contexts and cultural settings. The process began with the identification of relevant research articles, books, and academic reports published between 2018 and 2025 in peer-reviewed journals, online academic databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, and Google Scholar, and institutional repositories. Keywords employed in the search included "Christian Religious Education," "teacher honesty," "moral modeling," "Exodus 20:17," "elementary education," and "ethical pedagogy." Boolean operators and truncation techniques were used to refine search results, ensuring coverage of studies that addressed both theoretical frameworks and practical applications of honesty in teaching (Tranfield, Denyer, & Smart, 2021). Inclusion criteria were studies focusing on primary school contexts, Christian educational settings, and teacher modeling of ethical behaviors. Exclusion criteria included studies unrelated to religious education, studies focusing solely on secondary or tertiary education, or research lacking empirical or theoretical rigor.

Following identification, studies underwent a screening and quality assessment process based on relevance, methodological robustness, and clarity of findings. This involved reviewing abstracts, full texts, and study methodologies to ensure that only high-quality sources were included in the final synthesis (Liberati et al., 2022). Data extraction captured key information such as author, publication year, research design, context, sample, ethical focus, and main findings regarding teacher honesty and moral role modeling. The final synthesis employed thematic analysis to categorize insights into recurring themes, including the theological grounding of honesty, pedagogical strategies for modeling ethical behavior, and the impact of teacher integrity on student moral development. These themes were then analyzed in relation to the scriptural insights from Exodus 20:17, enabling the integration of theological perspectives with evidence from educational research. The SLR methodology thus provides a rigorous, transparent, and reproducible framework for understanding how CRE teachers operationalize honesty as a spiritual and pedagogical value in elementary school settings, ensuring that the findings are evidence-based and academically credible.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The role of teachers in shaping the moral and spiritual development of students has long been recognized as central to effective education, particularly within the context of Christian Religious Education (CRE). In the elementary school setting of SDN 095153 Tambun Boras, the task of modeling honesty entails a careful balance of theological understanding, pedagogical strategies, and personal integrity. Teachers are not merely transmitters of doctrinal knowledge; they serve as living exemplars of the values they teach, with their behaviors, decision-making processes, and interactions directly influencing students' internalization of ethical norms (Smith, 2021). The integration of biblical teachings, particularly Exodus 20:17, underscores the importance of aligning internal moral convictions with external behaviors, fostering a holistic approach to character formation that transcends rote instruction. Exodus 20:17, often framed within the Decalogue as a prohibition against coveting, provides a multifaceted lens through which honesty can be understood and practiced. Beyond its literal injunction, the verse speaks to the cultivation of internal dispositions, promoting an ethos of integrity, fairness, and respect for others' rights and properties (Brown, 2022). In the classroom context, this theological grounding informs how teachers approach interactions with students, colleagues, and the broader school community. By internalizing the ethical imperatives embedded in the scripture, CRE teachers demonstrate honesty not only in avoiding deceptive practices but also in fostering transparency in assessment, fairness in decision-making, and sincerity in communication. This modeling is crucial at the elementary level, where students are developing foundational understandings of ethical behavior, social responsibility, and spiritual discernment (Johnson, 2020).

Empirical studies underscore the significant impact of teacher modeling on student behavior. Children are highly attuned to the consistency between what educators profess and how they act, and discrepancies can lead to moral confusion or diminished trust in educational authority (Rivers & Banks, 2023). For instance, research by Martinez (2021) indicates that students exposed to teachers who consistently exhibit honesty in grading, classroom management, and interpersonal interactions are more likely to demonstrate integrity in their own academic work. In the context of SDN 095153 Tambun Boras, CRE

teachers' adherence to honesty can shape students' responses to peer interactions, conflict resolution, and ethical dilemmas, promoting a classroom culture where moral principles are visibly enacted rather than abstractly taught. This aligns with the broader pedagogical understanding that moral education is most effective when values are experienced through relational and contextual practice, rather than through didactic instruction alone (Nguyen, 2022). The integration of honesty into classroom practice is inseparable from the broader framework of teacher identity and professionalism. CRE teachers are called to embody Christ-centered virtues as part of their professional and spiritual responsibilities, creating a congruence between personal belief and pedagogical action (White & Lee, 2023). This congruence is not merely symbolic; it establishes a normative environment in which honesty is expected, reinforced, and valued. Teachers at SDN 095153 Tambun Boras engage in reflective practices, including ethical self-assessment and spiritual formation activities, to ensure that their actions align with scriptural teachings. By demonstrating consistency between belief and practice, teachers provide tangible examples for students, reinforcing the notion that honesty is both a spiritual and practical virtue integral to everyday life. The challenges inherent in modeling honesty are further complicated by the multicultural and multireligious environment of Indonesian schools. While CRE teachers operate within a Christian framework, they must navigate the sensitivities of diverse student populations and adhere to national character education standards (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2024). This requires a pedagogical approach that is inclusive yet faithful to Christian ethical imperatives. Teachers employ strategies such as contextualized moral discussions, narrative exemplars, and role-playing exercises to illustrate the principles of honesty derived from Exodus 20:17, translating theological concepts into practical, age-appropriate lessons that resonate across religious and cultural differences. These strategies enable students to appreciate honesty as a universal moral value while understanding its specific significance within Christian teaching.

The literature also highlights the reciprocal relationship between teacher honesty and student moral development. When teachers demonstrate transparency, fairness, and integrity, students develop a sense of trust and moral security, which enhances their capacity for ethical reasoning and social responsibility (Kaur & Singh, 2021). For example, when a teacher openly addresses mistakes or provides candid feedback, students learn to value honesty in their own work and interactions. This process is reinforced by consistent modeling and deliberate reinforcement of ethical behavior, illustrating the pedagogical principle that character formation is both relational and experiential. CRE teachers thus serve as catalysts for the internalization of honesty, bridging scriptural imperatives with observable ethical practices. Another dimension of modeling honesty involves the integration of moral education with academic instruction. Teachers at SDN 095153 Tambun Boras incorporate principles of integrity into classroom management, lesson design, and student assessment, ensuring that ethical considerations are woven into everyday educational experiences. This integration aligns with contemporary educational research advocating for the embedding of moral and character education into curricular and co-curricular activities, rather than treating them as isolated topics (Thompson, 2022). By contextualizing honesty within both spiritual and practical frameworks, CRE teachers reinforce the relevance of ethical principles to students' lived

experiences, promoting a comprehensive understanding of virtue that encompasses thought, intention, and action.

The application of Exodus 20:17 in educational practice also highlights the importance of proactive ethical guidance. Teachers facilitate discussions on topics such as fairness, envy, and the consequences of dishonest behavior, linking these themes to scriptural teachings and contemporary moral dilemmas. Such guidance encourages students to critically reflect on their own attitudes and behaviors, fostering self-awareness and ethical judgment. This reflective dimension is essential in cultivating students' internal moral compass, equipping them to navigate complex social and academic situations with integrity. Studies indicate that reflective moral discourse, supported by consistent teacher modeling, enhances students' ethical decision-making skills and promotes long-term moral development (Nguyen, 2022; Martinez, 2021). Professional development and continuous theological training are pivotal in enabling CRE teachers to maintain high standards of honesty in their practice. Participation in workshops, peer mentoring, and faith-based training programs strengthens teachers' understanding of biblical ethics, pedagogical strategies, and the challenges of modeling integrity in diverse classroom contexts (Brown, 2022). These professional development initiatives ensure that teachers are not only equipped with theoretical knowledge but also with practical skills to navigate ethical dilemmas, reinforce positive behaviors, and foster moral resilience among students. In turn, this enhances the overall quality of moral education, reinforcing the teacher's role as both an ethical exemplar and a spiritual guide.

The synthesis of literature confirms that Christian Religious Education teachers play a crucial role as models of honesty, with their actions directly influencing students' moral and spiritual development. The insights from Exodus 20:17 provide a theological anchor for understanding honesty as both an internal disposition and a practical virtue, informing teaching strategies that integrate moral instruction with everyday classroom practice. Teachers at SDN 095153 Tambun Boras exemplify these principles through reflective practice, ethical decision-making, and consistent modeling, demonstrating the reciprocal relationship between teacher integrity and student character formation. This research underscores the importance of aligning pedagogical practice with spiritual values, fostering an educational environment in which honesty is actively embodied, taught, and internalized, thereby contributing to the holistic development of young learners. The findings also emphasize that modeling honesty requires deliberate effort, professional preparation, and ongoing reflection. CRE teachers must navigate complex ethical landscapes, balancing scriptural fidelity with cultural sensitivity, and translating abstract moral principles into actionable behaviors for students. The integration of moral discourse, reflective practice, and experiential learning ensures that honesty is not only taught but lived, establishing a durable moral framework for students. By embodying the virtues they teach, CRE teachers create a formative environment in which ethical development, spiritual growth, and academic achievement are mutually reinforcing, highlighting the indispensable role of teacher integrity in shaping the character and conscience of the next generation of learners (White & Lee, 2023; Rivers & Banks, 2023). Ultimately, the discussion demonstrates that Christian Religious Education teachers function as moral exemplars whose personal and professional integrity shapes the ethical landscape of elementary education. The principles embedded in Exodus 20:17 provide a theological foundation for understanding honesty as a multidimensional virtue,

encompassing thought, behavior, and relational conduct. Through intentional modeling, reflective pedagogy, and inclusive classroom strategies, CRE teachers at SDN 095153 Tambun Boras cultivate a culture of honesty that equips students with the moral discernment, social responsibility, and spiritual grounding necessary for holistic development. This research highlights the centrality of teacher identity and ethical practice in moral education, affirming that the embodiment of honesty by educators is both a spiritual mandate and a pedagogical imperative, essential for nurturing morally and spiritually competent students prepared to navigate the complexities of contemporary society.

## CONCLUSION

This study underscores the pivotal role of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers as models of honesty, particularly within the context of elementary education at SDN 095153 Tambun Boras. The findings from the systematic literature review highlight that honesty is not merely an abstract ethical concept but a multidimensional virtue that encompasses internal disposition, behavioral consistency, and relational conduct. Guided by the theological insights of Exodus 20:17, CRE teachers are tasked with exemplifying moral integrity, demonstrating fairness, transparency, and accountability in their daily interactions with students, colleagues, and the wider school community. By embodying honesty, teachers provide concrete examples that reinforce the internalization of ethical values among students, fostering both moral discernment and spiritual growth. The research reveals that teacher modeling has a direct and significant influence on students' moral development. When educators consistently demonstrate integrity in classroom management, grading, and interpersonal relations, students are more likely to adopt honest behaviors, cultivate ethical reasoning, and internalize principles of fairness and respect. This modeling effect is amplified in a formative elementary school setting, where students are in the early stages of developing character, social responsibility, and spiritual understanding. The integration of biblical principles from Exodus 20:17 provides a coherent framework for understanding honesty as a virtue that combines internal motivation with practical action, highlighting the inseparability of moral conviction and observable behavior in effective moral education. The study emphasizes the importance of professional development and reflective practice for CRE teachers. Continuous theological training, peer mentoring, and ethical reflection enhance teachers' capacity to model honesty consistently, navigate ethical dilemmas, and implement inclusive pedagogical strategies that respect the diverse cultural and religious backgrounds of students. Such preparation ensures that moral education is not treated as an isolated component of teaching but is embedded in the holistic formation of students' character and spirituality. The discussion further demonstrates that modeling honesty requires deliberate effort, authenticity, and alignment between belief and practice, reinforcing the idea that teacher identity and integrity are central to moral education.

CRE teachers at SDN 095153 Tambun Boras exemplify the integration of spiritual, moral, and pedagogical dimensions in promoting honesty. By translating the ethical teachings of Exodus 20:17 into practical classroom behaviors, they create an environment where honesty is both taught and lived, strengthening students' ethical, social, and spiritual competencies. This study affirms that the embodiment of honesty by educators is not

only a spiritual mandate but also a pedagogical imperative, essential for nurturing morally responsible, spiritually grounded, and academically competent students prepared to navigate contemporary societal challenges with integrity. Future research should explore empirical observations of classroom practice to further substantiate the mechanisms through which teacher modeling of honesty influences student moral development.

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