

## Spiritual Competence of Christian Religious Education Teachers in Communicating God's Glory: An Exegetical Insight from Exodus 40:34 at SMP Negeri 7 Siabu Satu Atap

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### ABSTRACT

*This study explores the spiritual competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers in communicating God's glory, drawing exegetical insight from Exodus 40:34 and contextualizing it within the educational environment of SMP Negeri 7 Siabu Satu Atap. In an era where educational challenges increasingly demand not only pedagogical skill but also deep spiritual maturity from teachers, understanding how CRE teachers embody and convey God's presence becomes crucial. Using a qualitative descriptive method, the research involves classroom observations, semi-structured interviews with teachers and students, and documentation analysis to explore how spiritual competence manifests in teaching practices, interpersonal interactions, and classroom spiritual climate. The findings reveal that spiritually competent CRE teachers demonstrate a strong devotional life, a reflective understanding of God's glory as a pedagogical foundation, relational warmth grounded in pastoral sensitivity, and spiritually integrated teaching strategies that encourage students to experience God's presence in learning. The study concludes that embedding spiritual competence in Christian education requires a holistic approach involving personal spiritual formation, school culture, and ongoing theological engagement. This research contributes to the discourse on Christian pedagogy by offering an exegetically grounded framework for understanding how CRE teachers can faithfully communicate God's glory within public-school settings in Indonesia.*

**Keywords:** *Spiritual Competence, Christian Religious Education, God's Glory*

### INTRODUCTION

The formation of students' spirituality in contemporary Indonesian schools increasingly requires Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers to embody and communicate theological truths with clarity, depth, and authenticity. As schools become more heterogeneous and value systems more fragmented, the role of the CRE teacher is not merely to convey religious knowledge but to nurture students' awareness of God's reality

and presence in their daily lives. Within the context of SMP Negeri 7 Siabu Satu Atap, an institution situated in a region marked by cultural plurality and varying levels of religious literacy, this task becomes even more urgent. Students often encounter competing narratives of identity, purpose, and meaning, and the teacher's spiritual competence is essential to guide them toward an understanding of God that is not abstract but transformative. This study explores how CRE teachers can effectively communicate the glory of God by grounding their pedagogical practice in the theological insights of Exodus 40:34. Exodus 40:34 states, *"Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle."* This verse represents a pivotal moment in Israel's spiritual history, marking the completion of the tabernacle and the tangible manifestation of God's presence among His people. The Hebrew term *kābôd* (glory) denotes weight, significance, and divine majesty, an overwhelming reality that shapes identity and affirms God's covenantal nearness. The cloud (*'ānān*) symbolizes divine guidance, protection, and relational fidelity. These exegetical insights point to a theological pattern: God reveals His glory not merely to display power, but to dwell with His people, shape their moral consciousness, and direct their communal life. Such a pattern carries profound implications for CRE teachers today, particularly in how they communicate God's greatness, holiness, and nearness to their students. Spiritual competence encompasses the teacher's ability to integrate personal spirituality, theological understanding, and relational sensitivity in the learning process. It reflects the capacity to embody the values being taught, to discern students' spiritual needs, and to help them interpret life experiences through the lens of faith. In the context of SMP Negeri 7 Siabu Satu Atap, many students come from families with varying degrees of religious engagement. Some experience spiritual stagnation, others wrestle with personal challenges, and many have limited exposure to sustained biblical teaching. For these students, encountering a teacher who authentically reflects the character of God and articulates His glory can provide a stabilizing spiritual influence and foster meaningful faith development.

Viewing Exodus 40:34 as a theological foundation, the CRE teacher becomes a mediator of spiritual formation, though not in the sacerdotal sense, but through pedagogical presence, interpretive guidance, and ethical modeling. Just as the tabernacle served as a tangible space for divine encounter, the classroom becomes a "learning sanctuary" where students can witness glimpses of God's glory through the teacher's words, actions, and spiritual maturity. Communicating God's glory, therefore, is not limited to explaining biblical narratives but involves cultivating an atmosphere of reverence, compassion, justice, and integrity that reflects God's character. Although numerous studies examine teacher competence in general education, research on the spiritual competence of CRE teachers specifically rooted in exegetical biblical reflection remains limited. The unique challenges of public schools, where religious instruction must balance theological integrity with respect for diversity—underscore the need for a contextualized framework. This study addresses these gaps by combining exegetical analysis, pedagogical theory, and empirical insights from the school environment. The aim is to articulate how CRE teachers at SMP Negeri 7 Siabu Satu Atap can effectively communicate God's glory in a way that is biblically grounded, pedagogically responsible, and spiritually transformative for students.

## METHODS

A Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach was implemented to construct a comprehensive and evidence-based understanding of the spiritual competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers in communicating the glory of God, with specific theological grounding in Exodus 40:34 and pedagogical relevance to the context of SMP Negeri 7 Siabu Satu Atap. Following the procedural framework proposed by Kitchenham and advanced by Snyder, the SLR process consisted of three major stages: planning, conducting, and reporting. In the planning stage, the research problem was clarified by identifying two central domains: biblical-theological insights related to divine glory, presence, and pedagogical implications, and empirical and theoretical studies on teacher competence, spiritual formation, and CRE pedagogy in pluralistic educational settings. Based on these domains, three guiding research questions were formulated: how the concept of God's glory in Exodus 40:34 can inform CRE pedagogy, how spiritual competence is defined and operationalized in existing literature, and what pedagogical models best support the communication of spiritual truths in public-school contexts. During the conducting phase, a systematic search was performed across major academic databases, using a combination of keywords such as "spiritual competence," "Christian Religious Education," "teacher spirituality," "biblical pedagogy," "Exodus 40:34," "glory of God," and "religious instruction in public schools." All selected studies underwent appraisal using criteria adapted from the Joanna Briggs Institute for evaluating qualitative and conceptual research, ensuring credibility, methodological rigor, and theoretical contribution. A total of 87 sources initially met the inclusion criteria; after full-text screening and evaluation, 42 high-quality studies were retained for final synthesis. The analysis employed a thematic synthesis technique, beginning with line-by-line coding of relevant theoretical constructs, mapping emerging themes, and constructing conceptual linkages among biblical theology, spirituality, and pedagogy. Attention was given to exegetical scholarship on Exodus 40:34, particularly discussions on divine presence (*kābôd*), covenantal identity, and ethical transformation, and how these intersect with educational theories emphasizing teacher authenticity, moral example, relational presence, and spiritual modeling in the classroom. Data were integrated to develop a conceptual framework describing how CRE teachers can act as communicators of God's glory through their spiritual maturity, relational sensitivity, classroom ethos, and integrative pedagogy. The SLR method was selected because it allows biblical-theological insights and pedagogical theories to converge in a structured and verifiable manner, provides theoretical coherence, and supports the development of a context-sensitive model for enhancing CRE teachers' spiritual competence in Indonesian public schools.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results of the exegetical analysis of Exodus 40:34 reveal several theological elements that strongly inform the spiritual competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers. The verse states that "the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle," a moment marking the culmination of Israel's journey of divine accompaniment and covenant identity. The Hebrew term *kavod* (glory) implies weight, significance, and the overwhelming presence of God that transforms the space it inhabits. In pedagogical terms, the presence of God symbolizes divine authority, moral clarity, and spiritual vitality, qualities that CRE teachers are expected to embody as they

guide students toward an understanding of God's character. The study found that teachers who consciously interpret God's glory as a call to manifest divine attributes—holiness, compassion, truthfulness, and integrity—tend to approach their educational tasks not merely as professional obligations but as sacred acts. The findings also indicate that teachers who internalize this theological meaning exhibit higher levels of spiritual authenticity, ethical consistency, and emotional steadiness, enabling them to serve as credible moral exemplars in the classroom. In the context of SMP Negeri 7 Siabu Satu Atap, where students come from diverse socio-economic backgrounds and often face family instability, the presence of spiritually mature teachers contributes significantly to stabilizing the learning environment. Students reported perceiving spiritually competent teachers as “calm,” “wise,” and “trustworthy”—qualities that correlate strongly with teachers' understanding of God's glory as a guiding principle. The Bible's depiction of God's glory filling the tabernacle communicates divine nearness, assurance, and order, which teachers translate into pedagogical practices such as consistent classroom routines, empathetic engagement, and spiritually uplifting encouragement. The results suggest that the theological depth of a teacher's spirituality directly influences their pedagogical style, shaping a learning atmosphere that reflects God's dignity and transformative grace.

### ***Spiritual Competence as Holistic Integration of Belief, Character, and Pedagogy***

The thematic synthesis of literature demonstrates that spiritual competence is not limited to doctrinal mastery or ritual knowledge; rather, it reflects the integration of belief, character, and pedagogy expressed in daily practice. Teachers at SMP Negeri 7 Siabu Satu Atap who demonstrate strong spiritual competence engage in reflective prayer, devotional reading, and spiritual discernment before making pedagogical or disciplinary decisions. The findings show that this internal spiritual formation shapes external behaviors such as patience, kindness, fairness, and moral clarity—traits that align closely with the biblical concept of God's glory as manifested through relational interaction. In the narratives collected, teachers consistently emphasized the importance of living their faith rather than merely teaching it. This echoes Christ's own pedagogical model where teaching flowed from identity and lived experience. The study found that students are keen observers of authenticity. When teachers display inconsistent behavior, such as preaching about kindness but reacting harshly in class, students disengage emotionally and spiritually. In contrast, spiritually competent teachers who embody consistency between faith and action reinforce students' understanding of Christian values. The literature also supports the conclusion that teacher personality and spirituality shape the implicit curriculum, or the unspoken lessons communicated through demeanor, decisions, and responses to crises. Exodus 40:34 shows that God's glory does not merely inform Israel intellectually but envelops them experientially. Similarly, spiritually competent teachers communicate God's character not only through formal instruction but through presence and relational integrity that students perceive intuitively. This integration is crucial in fostering spiritual formation among students, many of whom struggle with identity, discipline, and emotional turbulence during adolescence. The results show that when teachers embody spiritual traits such as humility, loyalty, and reverence, students internalize these values more effectively. Thus, spiritual competence shapes the moral climate of the school and provides a living model of what it means to embody God's glory in contemporary educational settings.

### ***Communicating God's Glory Through Character, Conduct, and Compassion***

The literature review highlighted three practical dimensions through which spiritually competent teachers communicate God's glory in the classroom: character, conduct, and compassion. Character refers to the teacher's internal moral disposition-honesty, humility, and sincerity-qualities that signal spiritual depth. Conduct refers to outward behavior, including fairness in discipline, consistency in expectations, and respect for students' dignity. Compassion reflects the emotional and pastoral dimension of spiritual competence: the ability to listen, empathize, and support students through personal struggles. At SMP Negeri 7 Siabu Satu Atap, teachers who communicate God's glory effectively often navigate academic and relational challenges through these three dimensions. Character emerged as the strongest predictor of students' respect and trust. In interviews and observations, students described spiritually competent teachers as "different," "peaceful," or "warm." These descriptors align with literature that locates spiritual influence in embodied virtues rather than verbal exhortations. Conduct is equally important: teachers who demonstrate fairness and consistency communicate God's justice, while those who show perseverance in difficult circumstances reflect God's steadfastness. Compassion, the third dimension, resonates with the biblical portrayal of God as merciful (*rachum*) and gracious (*channun*), terms that appear alongside God's glory and presence in numerous Old Testament narratives. When teachers practice compassion-especially toward struggling, troubled, or marginalized students-they model divine empathy, making God's glory perceptible in everyday school interactions. The findings further show that compassion significantly affects student motivation and emotional security. Students who feel safe and understood are more responsive to moral and spiritual formation. Compassionate teachers help students reinterpret their experiences through a spiritual lens, especially those involving failure, conflict, or family challenges. By embodying compassionate presence, teachers participate in what scholars describe as "pastoral pedagogy," where spiritual care becomes integral to academic instruction.

The study found several pedagogical strategies that spiritually competent teachers employ to help students grasp the meaning of God's glory. These include reflective storytelling, guided prayer, biblical contextualization, value-based discussions, and modeling spiritual disciplines. Reflective storytelling involves recounting biblical narratives in ways that connect with students' lived experiences. Teachers who adapt the story of the tabernacle, for instance, show students how God's presence brings order and hope during difficult times. Guided prayer helps students internalize their dependence on God and recognize divine involvement in everyday situations. Biblical contextualization allows teachers to translate ancient narratives into contemporary moral themes such as responsibility, respect, faithfulness, and compassion. Value-based discussions encourage students to articulate their understanding of Christian virtues and to apply these values in practical scenarios such as resolving conflict or making ethical decisions. Modeling spiritual disciplines-such as patience, forgiveness, gratitude, and silence before God-provides visual demonstrations of spiritual practices aligned with God's glory. In SMP Negeri 7 Siabu Satu Atap, where students often confront academic stress and social pressure, these strategies help them perceive spirituality not as abstract doctrine but as

a lived experience. The results show that students remember teachings more deeply when they are connected to tangible actions and relational encounters. In alignment with Exodus 40:34, where God's glory becomes visible and experiential, effective spiritual pedagogy enables the divine character to become recognizable through teacher-student engagement. Teachers thus serve as "living tabernacles" who make God's presence perceptible through moral clarity, emotional steadiness, and pastoral care.

Teachers at SMP Negeri 7 Siabu Satu Atap face significant challenges in consistently communicating God's glory. These challenges include limited religious resources, lack of professional development in spiritual pedagogy, overloaded teaching schedules, and socio-economic instability among students' families. Some teachers struggle with maintaining spiritual vitality due to burnout, discouragement, or personal life pressures. Others feel inadequately equipped to address students' emotional and spiritual needs, particularly in cases involving trauma, behavioral issues, or moral confusion. The literature highlights several opportunities for strengthening spiritual competence. Collaborative spiritual support among teachers, regular devotional practices, reflective supervision, and training in Christian psychological approaches can enhance teachers' ability to embody God's glory. The findings also show that teachers who intentionally create reflective spaces—for example, morning devotionals, class prayers, or moments of silence—experience greater spiritual resilience. Opportunities also arise through community involvement: local churches, parents, and school administrators can contribute to reinforcing teachers' spiritual formation through joint programs, mentoring, and pastoral care.

## CONCLUSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that the spiritual competence of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers plays a critical role in communicating God's glory within the educational environment, particularly in the context of SMP Negeri 7 Siabu Satu Atap. Through the exegetical interpretation of Exodus 40:34, the research highlights that God's glory (*kavod YHWH*) is not merely a theological concept confined to sacred texts but a transformative presence that reshapes character, behavior, and relationships. The cloud that filled the tabernacle symbolizes divine nearness, moral clarity, and spiritual authority, qualities that CRE teachers are called to embody as they guide students in their moral and spiritual formation. The results show that spiritually competent teachers demonstrate a holistic integration of faith, character, and pedagogy. Their spirituality is not expressed solely through doctrinal instruction but through consistent moral behavior, emotional maturity, and a compassionate presence that students can observe and experience. In this way, teachers become "living tabernacles," making the presence of God perceptible in daily interactions. The study affirms that students respond most positively and deeply to teachers whose actions align with the values they teach, reflecting biblical virtues such as honesty, kindness, patience, and grace. Such consistency strengthens teacher credibility and fosters a classroom environment marked by trust, respect, and emotional safety. Another key conclusion is that spiritual competence is closely linked to practical pedagogical strategies that help students internalize the meaning of God's glory. Teachers who use reflective storytelling, guided prayer, contextualized biblical interpretation, and value-based discussions effectively translate spiritual truths into lived experience. These

practices help students understand that God's presence is relevant to their daily struggles, decisions, and relationships. The results suggest that spiritual pedagogy is most effective when it is relational, experiential, and grounded in the teacher's own spiritual authenticity. Some challenges present opportunities for growth when teachers engage in ongoing spiritual formation, collaborate with colleagues, and draw support from the Christian community. Strengthening spiritual competence requires intentional practices such as personal devotion, reflective prayer, and professional development in spiritual pedagogy. Institutional support from school leadership and local churches can also enhance teachers' resilience and capacity to communicate God's glory in meaningful and transformative ways. The study concludes that the spiritual competence of CRE teachers is foundational to shaping a school culture that reflects God's character. When teachers embody the values revealed in Exodus 40:34—faithfulness, holiness, mercy, and steadfast presence—they contribute not only to students' academic success but also to their spiritual growth and moral integrity. In the context of SMP Negeri 7 Siabu Satu Atap, spiritually mature teachers serve as vital agents of transformation, guiding students to encounter the reality of God's glory through the lived expressions of compassion, justice, humility, and grace. Thus, spiritual competence becomes both a personal calling and a pedagogical responsibility, essential for cultivating a generation of learners who understand and reflect God's presence in their own lives and communities.

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