

## Personal Holiness as Pedagogy: A Biblical-Theological Study of CRE Teachers at UPT SPF SD Negeri 104186 Tanjung Selamat

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### ABSTRACT

*Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers serve a dual role as both instructors of biblical knowledge and role models of faith. Their personal holiness functions as a living testimony that bridges the gap between doctrinal instruction and moral practice. Grounded in Exodus 40:15, which emphasizes priestly consecration as a perpetual ordinance, this study explores how CRE teachers embody holiness in the context of UPT SPF SD Negeri 104186 Tanjung Selamat, Indonesia. The research employed a qualitative descriptive approach, combining literature review, theological reflection, and empirical observation. Data were gathered through interviews with the CRE teacher, classroom observation, and documentation of school activities. These findings were interpreted through a biblical-theological lens, particularly the priestly calling in Exodus 40:15, and supported by scholarship on pedagogy, spirituality, and character education. The findings reveal that the CRE teacher embodies holiness in three interrelated dimensions: personal integrity, spirituality in professional duty, and transformative influence on students. Integrity is demonstrated through honesty, fairness, and discipline, aligning with biblical principles of being set apart for God. Spiritual practices such as prayer, Bible reading, and reverence in worship serve as formative experiences for students. Most significantly, the teacher's consistent example fosters respect, responsibility, and faith in students, confirming that lived witness is more influential than verbal instruction. The study underscores that personal holiness is indispensable in Christian education. As both pedagogy and prophecy, the teacher's life becomes a generational witness of faith, affirming that CRE is not only about knowledge transmission but about holistic formation in the light of Christ.*

**Keywords:** *Personal Holiness, Christian Religious Education, Pedagogy*

### INTRODUCTION

Christian Religious Education teachers occupy a distinctive role in the educational landscape because their responsibility is not limited to the cognitive transmission of

biblical knowledge, but extends to shaping the moral, spiritual, and ethical lives of their students. The very essence of CRE lies in embodying the Christian faith so that learners do not merely understand biblical principles theoretically, but also witness how those principles are lived out in daily practice. In this sense, the teacher becomes both an instructor and a role model, demonstrating the transformative power of faith in Christ within the educational context (Smith, 2019). This dual role makes the life of a CRE teacher a living testimony of holiness that students are expected to emulate, forming a bridge between abstract knowledge and concrete moral action. The biblical foundation for this responsibility can be seen in Exodus 40:15, which emphasizes the sanctification of the priests as a perpetual ordinance across generations. This text underscores that holiness is not only a personal calling but also a transgenerational responsibility, ensuring that each new generation is exposed to godly examples that foster continuity in faith and obedience (Wright, 2006). Within the biblical narrative, the consecration of priests signifies a sacred duty: their lives were to embody holiness so that God's people could be led in truth and righteousness. When applied to modern Christian education, this principle highlights that CRE teachers are entrusted with a similar calling. They are not merely facilitators of religious instruction, but also carriers of a sacred trust-responsible for passing down faith through lived example. In the Indonesian context, this responsibility takes on particular urgency. As the world's largest archipelago with a deeply pluralistic society, Indonesia faces significant challenges in moral and spiritual formation among its younger generations. The rapid influences of globalization and digitalization have brought both opportunities and threats to children's development. On one hand, digital resources open unprecedented access to information and learning opportunities. On the other, they expose children to cultural shifts, moral relativism, and harmful content that can erode values and faith if left unaddressed (Simanjuntak, 2020). Within this environment, teachers in general, and CRE teachers in particular, are called to serve not only as educators but also as protectors and cultivators of moral integrity in the lives of their students.

The locus of this study, UPT SPF SD Negeri 104186 Tanjung Selamat, reflects this dynamic tension. As a public elementary school, it operates within the national curriculum while also being attentive to the religious development of its students. The CRE teacher in this school, like many across Indonesia, faces the dual challenge of responding to educational standards while also fulfilling the spiritual mission of nurturing Christian character. The younger generation at this stage of life is especially impressionable, making the teacher's personal life and spiritual consistency a significant factor in shaping how students perceive and internalize faith values (Nainggolan, 2021). It is through the authenticity of the teacher's life-marked by holiness, discipline, and integrity-that students are able to see Christianity not only as doctrine, but as a way of life. The degradation of moral values among children poses a pressing concern. Studies indicate that issues such as dishonesty, lack of respect for authority, and diminished sense of responsibility are becoming increasingly visible in elementary education (Saragih, 2022). These trends underscore the necessity for strong role models who can provide clear moral direction. A CRE teacher who embodies holiness demonstrates to students how Christian values translate into real-life decisions, relationships, and behaviors. This lived witness becomes more influential than verbal teaching alone, as students are naturally inclined to follow what they see

consistently practiced before them (Bandura, 1997). Thus, the teacher's personal holiness functions as both pedagogy and testimony, integrating spiritual values into the holistic formation of the learner. This study therefore seeks to examine the significance of personal holiness as demonstrated by CRE teachers in shaping faith education and character formation. By focusing on Exodus 40:15 as a biblical foundation and analyzing its implications within the lived experience of a CRE teacher at UPT SPF SD Negeri 104186 Tanjung Selamat, the research aims to highlight how the sanctified life of a teacher acts as a generational witness of faith. In doing so, it contributes not only to the understanding of Christian pedagogy, but also to the practical strategies needed for addressing contemporary challenges in moral and spiritual education. The expectation is that the findings will affirm the indispensable role of personal example in CRE, reinforcing the call for teachers to live out holiness as a central dimension of their vocation in a globalized and morally complex world.

## METHODS

This is a qualitative descriptive approach, in order to capture the lived experiences, practices, and perceptions of the Christian Religious Education (CRE) teacher in relation to personal holiness and its influence on students' character formation. The locus of the research was UPT SPF SD Negeri 104186 Tanjung Selamat, a public elementary school in Indonesia, where CRE is integrated into the broader curriculum of religious and moral education. The choice of a qualitative design was based on the understanding that the phenomenon under investigation—personal holiness as a model of Christian faith—cannot be adequately measured or quantified, but rather requires rich descriptions, contextual interpretations, and theological reflection (Creswell & Poth, 2018). While the study involved field engagement, a significant component of the methodology consisted of a literature review and theological analysis. Literature on Christian pedagogy, teacher spirituality, and biblical studies provided the theoretical lens through which empirical findings were interpreted. Previous works highlight the role of teachers as moral exemplars who shape students' values not only through instruction but also through daily conduct (Smith, 2019; Nainggolan, 2021). Biblical scholarship on Exodus 40:15 was also consulted to establish the theological foundation of holiness as a generational calling, ensuring that the analysis connected local practices of the CRE teacher with broader scriptural principles (Wright, 2006). It grounded the research in existing knowledge about the intersection of education, spirituality, and biblical theology. It also served as a comparative framework against which the lived experiences of the teacher could be analyzed. In this sense, the study operated at the intersection of empirical observation and theological scholarship, creating a dialogue between text and context (Osmer, 2008).

In addition to literature-based analysis, data were gathered through some techniques: In-depth interviews with the CRE teacher to explore personal understanding of holiness, pedagogical practices, and challenges in embodying Christian faith in the school environment. Observation of classroom practices, prayer sessions, and extracurricular activities to document the integration of Christian values into the daily learning environment. These methods were chosen to ensure data triangulation, allowing for cross-validation between literature, observation, and personal testimony. The study

deliberately incorporated a biblical-theological approach by interpreting the teacher's lived practices through the lens of Exodus 40:15, which emphasizes the consecration of priests as a lasting ordinance. This hermeneutical integration ensured that findings were not only contextually descriptive but also theologically evaluative. The literature on holiness, sanctification, and the role of exemplars in faith transmission served as interpretive resources that bridged the gap between empirical data and biblical imperatives. The methodology combined qualitative descriptive inquiry with literature-based theological reflection, enabling a holistic examination of how personal holiness, as both a biblical mandate and a pedagogical practice, shapes the role of CRE teachers in Indonesian elementary schools.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study demonstrate that the Christian Religious Education (CRE) teacher at UPT SPF SD Negeri 104186 Tanjung Selamat strives to embody holiness in everyday practice through three interrelated aspects: personal integrity, spirituality in professional duty, and influence on students. These dimensions do not exist in isolation but form a holistic portrait of how a teacher's life can become a living testimony of faith. In line with Exodus 40:15, which speaks of the priestly consecration as a perpetual ordinance across generations, the role of the CRE teacher is understood not only as instructional but also as a vocation of sanctified service. This section discusses the results in depth, connecting them with theological, educational, and practical implications. One of the clearest findings of this research is the consistency of the CRE teacher's personal integrity. The teacher endeavors to ensure that words and actions align, modeling honesty, discipline, and simplicity in daily conduct. Integrity, in this sense, functions as the external manifestation of an inner commitment to God's holiness. Students observe that the teacher avoids favoritism, maintains fairness in grading, arrives punctually to class, and speaks with gentleness. These seemingly ordinary behaviors become extraordinary when seen through the lens of faith, as they serve as tangible expressions of a life consecrated to God (Tisdale, 2010).

From a biblical perspective, this finding resonates strongly with the priestly consecration described in Exodus 40:15. Just as the priests were anointed and set apart to represent God's holiness before the people of Israel, the CRE teacher embodies the principle of being "set apart" through ethical conduct in the school environment. Integrity, therefore, is not merely a moral value but a theological act—an offering of daily life as a witness to God's sanctifying presence (Wright, 2006). Educational literature further supports the importance of integrity in teaching. Bandura's (1997) theory of social learning emphasizes that children learn most effectively through observation and imitation of role models. Thus, the alignment between what the CRE teacher teaches and what is lived out in daily interactions becomes a critical factor in students' moral development. Research in character education consistently demonstrates that students are more influenced by the example of trusted adults than by formal lessons in morality (Nucci & Narvaez, 2014). In this regard, the integrity of the CRE teacher serves as both curriculum and pedagogy, shaping students' understanding of honesty, discipline, and simplicity as core Christian virtues. The context of globalization and digitalization makes integrity even more crucial. As children are increasingly exposed to conflicting values through media and technology,

the lived consistency of their teacher provides a counter-narrative rooted in faith. The CRE teacher's daily integrity offers stability, reinforcing the truth that Christian values are not abstract ideals but lived realities. In this sense, integrity becomes a form of resistance against moral relativism, anchoring students in a faith that is credible because it is embodied.

### ***Spirituality in Professional Duty***

The next significant finding concerns the teacher's consistent spirituality in fulfilling professional duties. The CRE teacher integrates prayer, Bible reading, and reverence in school worship activities, making spiritual discipline a natural part of the educational environment. This habitual spirituality not only nurtures the teacher's own faith but also provides students with a living demonstration of how Christian devotion shapes daily life. This aspect of the findings reflects the biblical paradigm of priesthood. In Exodus 40:15, consecration was not limited to private holiness but was enacted through public service in the sanctuary. Similarly, the CRE teacher's spiritual practices are not confined to personal devotion but extend into the communal life of the school. The act of leading prayer, guiding children in scripture reading, and modeling reverence during worship mirrors the priestly duty of leading the people of God in corporate holiness (Koller, 2011). By doing so, the teacher embodies the conviction that spirituality is not peripheral to education but central to its transformative purpose. From an educational standpoint, spirituality in teaching is increasingly recognized as a vital dimension of holistic pedagogy. Palmer (1998) argues that good teaching flows from the identity and integrity of the teacher, which includes a spiritual dimension that cannot be divorced from professional practice. In this case, the CRE teacher's consistency in spiritual duties affirms that education is not merely about transmitting knowledge but about forming the whole person in relation to God. By embedding prayer and scripture into the rhythm of school life, the teacher demonstrates that faith is not compartmentalized but integrated into every aspect of learning.

The emphasis on spirituality addresses the challenges of moral degradation among children. With rising concerns about disrespect, dishonesty, and lack of responsibility (Saragih, 2022), the CRE teacher's example of devotion provides students with an alternative vision of life centered on God. When children participate in prayer led by a teacher who genuinely lives by faith, they are more likely to internalize those practices as meaningful rather than ritualistic. In this way, the teacher acts as a spiritual guide, ensuring that students experience faith not merely as doctrine but as lived relationship with God. The literature on religious education affirms that spirituality in teaching has intergenerational impact. Studies by Astley (2014) highlight that teachers who integrate faith into professional duties create a legacy of belief that extends beyond the classroom. In light of Exodus 40:15, this finding suggests that the CRE teacher's spirituality functions as a form of priestly consecration, shaping not only the present generation of students but also their future role as witnesses of faith in their families and communities. Perhaps the most profound finding is the influence that the CRE teacher's holy example has on students. Through integrity and spirituality, the teacher cultivates in students a reverence for God, mutual respect, and resistance to negative behaviors. Observations show that

students mirror the teacher's habits of honesty, politeness, and attentiveness during prayer and scripture reading. This confirms the principle that example often speaks louder than instruction, particularly in the moral and spiritual formation of children (Lickona, 1991). Theologically, this finding aligns with the biblical emphasis on generational transmission of faith. The sanctification of priests in Exodus 40:15 was instituted as a perpetual ordinance, highlighting the necessity of living witnesses for the ongoing faith of the people. In the same way, the CRE teacher's life serves as a contemporary embodiment of this principle. Holiness, when lived consistently, becomes a generational bridge, ensuring that the faith of the teacher is not confined to personal devotion but flows into the lives of students. Educational psychology further explains this dynamic through the concept of "significant others" in child development. Children are more likely to adopt behaviors modeled by authority figures whom they trust and admire (Wentzel, 2014). In this study, the CRE teacher's consistent holiness establishes credibility, making it possible for students to accept moral guidance not as imposed authority but as authentic wisdom. The influence is therefore relational, rooted in trust cultivated through lived example. The impact of such influence extends beyond individual students to the broader school culture. When a teacher consistently embodies holiness, it creates a normative environment where respect, responsibility, and reverence are valued. This cultural shaping demonstrates that the role of a CRE teacher goes beyond personal interactions; it establishes a collective ethos that affects the entire educational community. Such influence underscores the prophetic dimension of teaching, wherein the teacher does not merely deliver lessons but functions as a bearer of God's light in the school setting (Groome, 2011).

### ***Holiness as Prophetic Vocation in Contemporary Context***

The discussion of these findings reveals that the call to holiness in Exodus 40:15 remains deeply relevant in the context of contemporary Christian education. The CRE teacher's life of integrity, spirituality, and influence does not simply fulfill pedagogical duties but also embodies a prophetic vocation. In a pluralistic and globalized society where values are increasingly contested, the CRE teacher becomes a prophetic witness, pointing students toward a life set apart for God. This prophetic role is evident in the way the teacher challenges prevailing cultural narratives. Whereas society often prioritizes success, material gain, or self-expression, the holy life of the teacher models humility, faithfulness, and obedience to God. Such a witness speaks prophetically, not through condemnation, but through the quiet yet powerful testimony of consistency. As Brueggemann (2012) argues, prophetic ministry often involves embodying an alternative imagination—a vision of life rooted in God's covenant rather than cultural conformity. The CRE teacher at UPT SPF SD Negeri 104186 Tanjung Selamat embodies this alternative by showing students that holiness is possible, desirable, and life-giving. The prophetic dimension also highlights the teacher's responsibility to resist the fragmentation of knowledge and faith in education. In many contemporary settings, religious education risks becoming marginalized or treated as an optional subject. Yet through personal holiness, the CRE teacher reaffirms that faith is integral to the whole educational process. By weaving together integrity, spirituality, and influence, the teacher demonstrates that education is inherently spiritual and that the formation of character cannot be separated from the call to holiness.

The findings of this study can be situated within broader discussions in educational and theological literature. The emphasis on personal integrity aligns with research in character education, which identifies modeling as the most effective strategy for moral formation (Nucci & Narvaez, 2014). The focus on spirituality resonates with Palmer's (1998) insistence that teaching is a deeply personal and spiritual act. The evidence of student influence echoes Bandura's (1997) theory of observational learning and the biblical mandate for generational transmission of faith (Deut. 6:6-9). The results reinforce the enduring relevance of Exodus 40:15. Just as the priests of Israel were consecrated to embody holiness for the people, so too the CRE teacher is consecrated to embody holiness for students. This consecration is not ceremonial but practical, manifested in integrity, spirituality, and influence. In this way, the findings affirm that the biblical vision of holiness as a transgenerational calling is not merely an Old Testament relic but a living mandate for contemporary Christian educators. The study's findings reveal that the CRE teacher at UPT SPF SD Negeri 104186 Tanjung Selamat embodies holiness through personal integrity, spirituality in professional duty, and influence on students. These aspects align with the biblical call of Exodus 40:15 and confirm the enduring importance of lived example in Christian education. The discussion demonstrates that holiness in teaching is both pedagogical and prophetic: pedagogical, because it directly shapes student behavior and values; prophetic, because it offers a counter-cultural witness to God's covenantal truth. By living a consecrated life, the CRE teacher fulfills a sacred vocation that extends beyond instruction to the formation of faithful disciples for generations to come.

## CONCLUSION

The personal example of Christian Religious Education (CRE) teachers in living a holy life is a fundamental aspect of faith education. Teaching in the Christian context has never been limited to the transmission of knowledge or the delivery of moral instruction; it is primarily about embodying values that are rooted in Scripture and demonstrated in daily practice. In the case of UPT SPF SD Negeri 104186 Tanjung Selamat, the study revealed that the consistency of teachers in living out holiness has a tangible impact on the character and spirituality of students. This finding underscores the principle that students are not only shaped by what they hear in class but even more by what they see lived out in the lives of their teachers. The biblical foundation for this perspective is found in Exodus 40:15, where God instructs Moses to consecrate Aaron and his sons so that their priesthood would be "an everlasting priesthood throughout their generations." This passage affirms that holiness in service is not a temporary or individual matter but one that has transgenerational significance. When applied to the context of education, the passage highlights the enduring relevance of holy living for CRE teachers. Just as the priests of Israel were called to serve as representatives of God's holiness to the people, so too teachers are called to embody integrity, faithfulness, and spiritual discipline for the sake of the younger generation. The study in Tanjung Selamat illustrates this principle clearly. When CRE teachers demonstrate integrity in their words and actions, discipline in their spiritual lives, and faithfulness to their divine calling, students are more likely to develop respect for God, sensitivity to moral values, and a willingness to avoid negative behaviors. This influence goes beyond academic achievement, reaching into the

formation of character and the nurturing of faith. In this way, the teacher's role becomes both pedagogical and pastoral: not only transmitting knowledge but guiding students toward spiritual maturity. The consistency of a teacher's holy life serves as a living curriculum. Research in education emphasizes that children learn most effectively through role models they admire and trust. In environments where verbal instruction may sometimes be disregarded, the silent witness of a teacher's daily conduct becomes a more powerful instrument of transformation. By practicing honesty, humility, and reverence, CRE teachers provide students with a concrete vision of what it means to live faithfully before God. The responsibility of CRE teachers extends beyond professional competency. They are called to preserve integrity, cultivate spiritual discipline, and remain steadfast in their divine vocation. In doing so, education ceases to be merely academic or technical. It becomes holistic, shaping students not only intellectually but also morally and spiritually. Ultimately, this approach aligns with the Christian vision of education as the formation of the whole person in the light of Christ. Through their example of holiness, CRE teachers fulfill a sacred mission: preparing a generation that will not only excel in knowledge but also walk faithfully with God.

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