

# SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHER SERVICE STRATEGY FOR CHILDREN'S SPIRITUAL GROWTH DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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*Submitted: 29 June 2022 Revision: 15 Oktober 2022 Accepted: 5 December 2022*

## Abstract

There are many factors that can affect a child's spiritual growth, such as the role of parents, the environment, and Christian religious education teachers both at school and in the church. One of the topics discussed in this article is the role of the Sunday School teacher in the life of a child. Therefore, the teacher must have several abilities that can later complement the children. They are spiritual and have a good understanding of the Bible, but they are also very creative when it comes to serving children. However, the current obstacle in the Sunday School section is the strategy for serving children according to the situation and conditions during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Because strategy is very important so that Sunday School children continue to worship God during the pandemic. Some of the strategies that will be discussed in this article are online but also onsite services. However, this strategy also has drawbacks. This article offers several strategies to help teachers stay enthusiastic about serving and Sunday School children grow in their faith during the Covid-19 Pandemic.

**Keywords:** service strategy; spiritual growth; sunday school teacher; covid-19 pandemic



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## INTRODUCTION

Sunday school is part of the ministry in the church therefore it is needed to understand the meaning of the church. The Church is the people who are called out by God from the darkness of sin to the light of Christ. In other words, the church is called as a witness of Christ, proclaiming

salvation in the world (Acts 2). This proves that the church carries out the Great Commission of the Lord Jesus (Matt. 28:19-20) including the world of children. The Lord Jesus said, "let the children come unto me, do not hinder them, for such are the people who have the kingdom of God" (Mark 10:14, NKJ). This expression of the

Lord Jesus shows that children have an important place in the ministry of the Lord Jesus, because children are part of the kingdom of God. Sunday school children also need to receive special attention in the church because they are the next generation in the growth and development of the church.<sup>1</sup>

The Covid-19 pandemic has brought all linkages in human life to a cessation. Places indicated to cause crowds are asked not to operate temporarily. Policies related to health protocols that must be implemented, make most churches unable to worship *onsite*. Inevitably, the church must be able to adapt to continue to provide worship services for the congregation.<sup>2</sup> One of them is Sunday School worship activities. Children are required to worship at home. Sunday School teachers who are usually prepared to teach their children are required to be at home. Seeing situations and conditions like this, teachers are required to have creativity in reaching Sunday School children. The Covid-19 pandemic is still not over in this world,

including in Indonesia. During this pandemic, it is very unhappy if education stops just like that, including Sunday School education. Therefore, teachers must growth their creativity in teaching, serving, and providing motivation for Sunday School children during this Pandemic.<sup>3</sup>

Teachers are creative to develop the right strategies so that they can serve children even though the Covid-19 Pandemic is beating. The right strategy is believed to be able to make children will not forget that Sunday is the day when they must continue to worship God even from home. Suitable ministry strategies are needed, so that children can grow in a strong foundation of faith, so that in the next stage of growth they continue to believe and strongly believe in Christ.<sup>4</sup>

Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, of course, the service strategy used must be different from the strategy before the pandemic. Because Sunday School children still must comply with government regulations to stay at home to avoid the Covid-19 virus. Sunday School teachers

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<sup>1</sup> Yenny Anita Pattinama, "The Role of Sunday School in Church Growth," *SCRIPTA: Journal of Theology and Contextual Ministry* 8, no. 2 (2020): 132–151.

<sup>2</sup> Dwi Novita Sari, "Modifikasi Layanan Sekolah Minggu Sebagai Wujud Gereja Ramah Anak Di Masa Pandemi," *PROSIDING STT Sumatera Utara* 1, no. 1 (2021): 43–52, <https://stt-su.ac.id/e-journal/index.php/prosiding/article/view/50>.

<sup>3</sup> Maria Yessica Halik et al., "Meningkatkan Kreativitas Sekolah Minggu Di Masa Pandemi

Covid-19 Desa Pana Kecamatan Alla Kabupaten Enrekang," *Dharma Jnana: Jurnal Pengabdian Kepada Masyarakat* 1, no. 3 (2021): 166–178, <https://e-journal.unmas.ac.id/index.php/dharmajnana/article/view/3101>.

<sup>4</sup> Mikha Agus Widiyanto and Nostry Nostry, "Strategi Pelayanan Guru Sekolah Minggu Bagi Pertumbuhan Rohani Anak," *EDULEAD: Journal of Christian Education and Leadership* 2, no. 2 (2021): 276–286.

must work with parents so that a service strategy can be accomplished. Parents have a very big position for children during the Covid-19 Pandemic.

Some of the service strategies that will be discussed in this article are *online* worship and children respond via *WhatsApp*. Teachers hope that through the strategies implemented, children still have a longing to worship God even later when the Covid-19 pandemic is over, they can return to Sunday school services with excitement. Learning strategies are very important to carry out the learning process so that learning objectives become effective and learning materials can be captivated well by students. Learning will not be effective if the learning strategy does not match the circumstances of the learners.<sup>5</sup>

The Church should simplify in the ministry of children to realize its spiritual growth, through communion and teaching.<sup>6</sup> According to Sari, good spiritual growth will make children have a strong faith in God, love for others and involve themselves in service so that in the future they can become spiritual leaders. In this case,

children's ministry is very important because children are the next generation of the church. The way children are educated and grow their faith will determine the communicate of church ministry going forward.<sup>7</sup>

However, the encounter for Sunday School teachers is the ability to main digital technology, mentoring from parents and the ability of parents to provide supporting facilities such as *smartphones* and internet quotas. Online Sunday School activities *are* quite difficult because they must master adequate technology and devices. The online Sunday School system makes it difficult for children to interact and play an active role in teaching and learning activities. In the delivery of God's words children feel soaking because they only listen to lectures, watch videos. The lack of creativity possessed by the teacher so that they still apply monotonous teaching methods, will make children feel saturated and do not listen well to the material presented by the teacher.<sup>8</sup>

The research method in this article is literature research with a descriptive

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<sup>5</sup> Kalis Stevanus and Dwiati Yulianingsih, "Strategi Pembelajaran Pendidikan Agama Kristen Pada Anak Usia Dini," *Peada': Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Kristen* 2, no. 1 (2021): 15–30, <https://peada.iakn-toraja.ac.id/index.php/ojsdatapeada/article/view/27>.

<sup>6</sup> Widiyanto and Nostroy, "Strategi Pelayanan Guru Sekolah Minggu Bagi Pertumbuhan Rohani Anak."

<sup>7</sup> Sari, "Modifikasi Layanan Sekolah Minggu Sebagai Wujud Gereja Ramah Anak Di Masa Pandemi."

<sup>8</sup> Daniel Supriyadi, "Aktualisasi Manajemen Kreativitas Guru Sekolah Minggu Di Masa Pandemi Covid-19," *Didaktikos: Jurnal Pendidikan Agama Kristen* 4, no. 1 (2021): 1–9, <https://journal.stipakdh.ac.id/index.php/didaktikos/article/view/42>.

qualitative approach. The writer conducts a review of library sources and describes them in a description framework by describing the Sunday School Teacher Service Strategy for Children's Spiritual Growth During the Covid-19 Pandemic.<sup>9</sup>

The writer also conducts a literature study of various literature sources in the form of theological journals or books that are in accordance with the theme, so that an overview of concepts is obtained, a basis for motivating teachers and children to be enthusiastic about worship during the Covid-19 pandemic. In this study, in addition to using the Bible as a primary reference, books and other primary sources that are relevant to the topic are also used according to the principle of *literature review*.

The data collection technique used was an interview with several spiritual leaders, Sunday school teachers, parents and children about the obstacles encountered in the implementation of Sunday School, and the actions taken to overcome them.

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<sup>9</sup> Pratiwi Eunike and Bobby Kurnia Putrawan, "Kajian Pedagogis Guru Pendidikan Agama Kristen Terhadap Motivasi Belajar Siswa Di Era Pandemi Covid 19 : Studi Kasus Siswa Smk Harapan Bagi Bangsa , Jakarta Utara" 6, no. 1 (2021): 32–44, <https://christianeducation.id/e-journal/index.php/regulafidei/article/view/83>; John W. David Creswell and John W. David Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and*

## DISCUSSION

In the discussion section, we will explain about Sunday school children, Sunday school teachers, and Sunday School Service Strategies during the Covid-19 Pandemic.

### Sunday School Children

Children are the next generation or generations to come, not only for the nation and their families but also for the church. Therefore, children must also be guided so that they can continue to grow in God and have a character that glorifies God. Many places in the Bible record that God is concerned about children. From the days of Moses (Exodus 10:8-11), Joshua (Joshua 24:15) and in Jesus' own day (Matthew 18:10; 19:13-15). If God is so concerned about children, God's church should teach and educate them. Jesus Himself was once a child and once said " "Why were you searching for me?" he asked. "Didn't you know I had to be in my Father's house?" (Luke 2:49). It is appropriate for children to receive education in the church from an early age.<sup>10</sup>

*Mixed Methods Approaches*, 5th ed. (Newbury Park, California: SAGE Publications, 2018).

<sup>10</sup> Hadi Siswoyo, "Sekolah Minggu Sebagai Sarana Dalam Membentuk Iman Dan Karakter Anak," *Sanctum Domine: Jurnal Teologi* 7, no. 1 (2020): 121–134, <https://journal.sttni.ac.id/index.php/SDJT/article/view/47>.

Although each child is inimitable, the Bible says that a child is a complete human being who shares the same spiritual characteristics, namely: The child is a gift of God. Indeed, every child is born of a father and mother, but nevertheless the formation of a child in the womb is a work of miracle that can only happen by God's will. Therefore, a child born is a gift of God even though sometimes his birth is not desired by both parents. Children are precious in God's eyes. The attitude of the Lord Jesus when welcoming children shows that children are never underestimated by God. Children are welcomed and blessed as a person who needs to be served and cared for because their souls are precious in the eyes of God. The child is a corrupt human being. Every child is a creation of God created in the image and likeness of God. But the image and likeness of God was corrupted after the fall of man in sin. Since then, every human being is a sinner in the eyes of God, containing children. They were born in the world as sinners who would one day receive eternal condemnation. The child is a human being who needs salvation. Praise the Lord, that salvation through the blood of Christ is

also offered for children. Through the preaching of the gospel, the Holy Spirit can enable them to receive a new birth and increase new life in Christ.<sup>11</sup>

### **Sunday School Teacher**

*A man who has believed in Christ*

The called Sunday School teacher must already be a Christian. Christians, that is, people who believe that the Lord Jesus is their Savior. Believer means one who has received the guarantee of salvation and the one who is given the inheritance of the kingdom of heaven. This means that the teacher has received a heavenly call from the Lord Jesus. The next task and vocation are to share the understanding of Jesus with others, especially Sunday School students.<sup>12</sup>

*A Spiritually Mature Man*

Sunday School teachers need to be transported to a love of the Word, which will change their improper understanding, which will continually correct their motivation for ministry, and encourage them to sacrifice for the children they serve. In essence, child servants need to relate with the Word and apply the Word.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> I Penjelasan Lengkap et al., "Kursus Guru Sekolah Minggu - Index - PESTA Online Kursus Guru Sekolah Minggu [ TP-02-GSM ]" (2006).

<sup>12</sup> Sutanto Leo, *Kiat Sukses Mengelola Dan Mengajar Sekolah Minggu* (Yogyakarta: Penerbit Andi, 2008).

<sup>13</sup> Rebeca Bar-Israel, "Makalah Pelayanan Anak," *Studylib* (2016): 1–20.

Otherwise, then teachers will not have the power to serve God and even be unable to teach God's Word.

### *Teacher's Obligations and Responsibilities*

A new Sunday School teacher can be called a good teacher if he is passionately willing to carry out his obligations and responsibilities. There are several things that are required of a Sunday School teacher, namely:<sup>14</sup>

1. Teaching, in this teaching and learning process, teachers must be able to realize changes in students, both changes in knowledge, thoughts and attitudes or behaviors.
2. Pastoring, teachers are to emulate Jesus in herding His little sheep. A shepherd has a heart that is willing to sacrifice. Fatherhood (1 Corinthians 4:15), a teacher can not only be superior, but can also share his heart and life as a father who loves his son.
3. Setting an example, a teacher will have a very big inspiration on his students if he continues to give positive input that can be imitated, both in his way of thinking and his speech.

4. Evangelizing (1Tim. 2:7), teaching not only fills students with cognitive truths, but primarily satisfies the needs of their souls with saving love and faith. Therefore, bring the students to hear the gospel news so that salvation reaches their souls.
5. Praying, another obligation of a Sunday School teacher is to pray for his students one by one by mentioning their respective names and needs.

The responsibilities described above can be carried out by teachers during the pandemic but with a high commitment and love that has been demonstrated by the Lord Jesus, the Great Master.

### *A Child Companion or Pastoral Counseling*

The Sunday School teacher is a friend. He is not only teaching but also able to provide mentoring and pastoral counseling. This means that a companion has a better condition than the person being accompanied, that is, healthier, has skills, etc.<sup>15</sup> This potential should be used as much as possible so that it becomes an equal reciprocal relationship, mutually dividing and growing. This perspective will place

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<sup>14</sup> Ester A. Tandana, Esti Koku Yowa, and Novida Dwici Yuanri Manik, "Character Education In Forming Student Behavior," *Didache: Jurnal Teologi dan Pendidikan Kristiani* 3, no. 2 (July 3, 2022): 161–176, <https://jurnal.moriah.ac.id/index.php/didache/article/view/48>; Kezia Yemima and Sarah Stefani, "Khotbah Eksposisi Narasi Yang Kreatif Dan

Kontekstual Bagi Anak-Anak Generasi Z Usia 5-6 Tahun," *Jurnal Gamaliel: Teologi Praktika* 1, no. 2 (September 23, 2019): 72–85, <http://jurnal.stt-gamaliel.ac.id/index.php/gamaliel/article/view/41>.

<sup>15</sup> Israel B Olaore et al., "Artificial Intelligence (AI): The Christian Perspective," *Journal of Information Engineering and Applications* 4, no. 11 (2014): 96–100.

the companion appearing as a person who sees the person being accompanied in a broader perspective, not only limited to problems or symptoms, but more deeply, that is, to the whole person from the social, mental, and spiritual physical aspects.<sup>16</sup>

### *Teachers Work with Parents*

The role of parents and Sunday school teachers is very important in the development of children in order to develop well, encouragement or motivation from parents is needed children will have enthusiasm in carrying out their activities, then their ideals or talents can be realized so that they produce satisfactory results and parents are proud of what the child achieved.<sup>17</sup> A positive relationship will produce a positive impact, while a negative relationship will produce a negative impact as well. In a relationship that is established within family members, both between parents and children have a great influence, especially for the education of the child himself.<sup>18</sup>

### *The Role of Children's Spiritual Growth*

Sunday School teachers also have a significant role for the spiritual growth of children in addition to their parents and environment. The teacher is a person who understands and motivates the child to talk about the truth and life. Jesus himself reminded that what is in a person's heart, is spoken through his mouth and He affirms that a person can think well before speaking so that he does not spit out vain words (Matt. 12:34-37). This sentence provides an explanation that the teacher must constantly learn to say constructive words to children.<sup>19</sup>

The teacher is a bridge and at the same time an agent that allows students to have a dialogue with their world. Teachers are called to encourage students to gain knowledge, understanding or even contribute to their world. For this reason, the teacher must grow in the aspect of his personality.<sup>20</sup>

In serving children, Sunday School teachers play an important role because they are the life examples for the children

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<sup>16</sup> Jemmy Suhadi et al., "Formulasi Pastoral Holistik Melalui Pendampingan Pastoral: Sebuah Rujukan Pelayanan Pastoral Yang Menjawab Kompleksitas Hidup," *Jurnal Teruna Bhakti* 4, no. 1 (2021): 131–139, <https://e-journal.stakterunabhakti.ac.id/index.php/teruna/article/view/121>.

<sup>17</sup> Jarot Wijanarko, *Mendidik Anak Dengan Hati* (Jakarta: Keluarga Indonesia Bahagia, 2018).

<sup>18</sup> Artika Ratu, Sutrisno Sutrisno, and Christiani Hutabarat, "Peran Hubungan Orang Tua

Dalam Proses Pembelajaran Anak Di Masa Covid 19," *Didache: Jurnal Teologi dan Pendidikan Kristiani* 1, no. 2 (2020): 141–154, <https://jurnal.moriah.ac.id/index.php/didache/article/view/40>.

<sup>19</sup> Yemima and Stefani, "Khotbah Eksposisi Narasi Yang Kreatif Dan Kontekstual Bagi Anak-Anak Generasi Z Usia 5-6 Tahun."

<sup>20</sup> Palunte Magdalena, "Peranan Guru Sekolah Minggu Terhadap Perilaku Anak Di Gereja Sebagai Pengikut Kristus," *Mp* (2019): 9.

they foster, and they are facilitators for children to be able to grow in creativity as stated above. Teachers can take advantage of various methods and media in their learning because they can train children to be able to work together, think critically in their own way and can increase their creativity. Sunday School teachers are very influential in their development both in the development of their attitudes, faith and views on others and the world.<sup>21</sup>

### **Sunday School Service Strategies during the Covid-19 Pandemic**

In the Great Dictionary Indonesian, the word strategy means a careful plan regarding activities to achieve specific goals.<sup>22</sup> The word strategy comes from the Greek *strategos* which means an attempt to achieve a victory in a war originally used in a military environment, but the term strategy is used in various fields that have a relatively similar essence.<sup>23</sup>

The learning strategy of Christian Religious Education in general is a strategic pattern that contains procedural steps in designing a Christian Religious Education

learning program according to the demands of the curriculum to obtain student learning outcomes.<sup>24</sup> In the curriculum of Christian Religious Education, the affective and psychomotor realms are greater than cognitive so that through the learning of Christian Religious Education, it is hoped that students will experience the development of their faith and morals in addition to the development of their knowledge and psychomotor. The integrity of the development of the affective, cognitive, psychomotor realms is based on Christian values.<sup>25</sup>

A Sunday School teacher though not relying on methods to bring one to Christ, but that doesn't mean there's no need to be familiar with educational methods. Because the right method can be used by God to achieve the goal of effective education. A good method can direct a successful service.<sup>26</sup>

However, the current obstacle for Sunday School teachers is that they are faced with the Covid-19 pandemic and the adaptation of new habits launched by the government. The adaptation of new habits

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<sup>21</sup> Haka Avesina, "BAB 1 PENDAHULUAN 1.1. Latar Belakang Masalah AFTA (ASEAN)," no. 1989 (2015): 1–17.

<sup>22</sup> Pusat Bahasa Departemen Pendidikan Nasional, *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* (Jakarta: Balai Pustaka, 2005).

<sup>23</sup> Laksmi Dewi dan Masitoh, *Strategi Pembelajaran* (Jakarta: DEPAG RI, 2009).

<sup>24</sup> Oditha R. Hutabarat, *Model-Model Pembelajaran Aktif Pendidikan Agama Kristen SD,*

*SMP, SMA Berbasis Kompetensi* (Bandung: Bina Media Informasi, 2005).

<sup>25</sup> Oditha R. Hutabarat dan Janse Belandina Non-Serrano, *Pedoman Untuk Guru PAK* (Bandung: Bina Media Informasi, 2006).

<sup>26</sup> Paulus Daun, *Penuntun Ke Dalam Sekolah Minggu Kanak-Kanak* (Manado: Yayasan Daun Family, 1989).

due to the Covid-19 pandemic changed the order of worship habits in the church. Therefore, teachers need to modify Sunday School services during the Pandemic.<sup>27</sup>

As long as the number of Covid-19 sufferers increases, Sunday schools are carried out *online*. Teachers use strategies in ministry according to the abilities of parents of Sunday School children. As a teacher, he cannot remain silent when cases of Covid-19 sufferers increase, and *onsite* worship is suspended. Teachers can do several strategies in ministry. Even if it is simple. Teachers have an important role in a child's spiritual growth.

#### *Long Distance Sunday School Ministry Strategy*

Strategies that Sunday School teachers can do to keep children growing spiritually despite the pandemic, namely:

1. Ask about the condition or circumstances of them and their families. There may be some children and their families who need help due to the pandemic.
2. Praying for children and their families to stay strong and continue to hope in Christ, as well as their families so that they can survive.

3. Create an online worship. If the church has complete tools, the teacher can make a worship using *the Zoom application, Google Meeting*, etc. or can also make video recordings, voice recordings that can be seen and heard by children via *smartphones*. Children not only watch but they can also respond to the teacher via *Whatsapp, line* or *video call*
4. Teachers can give interesting assignments and creativity even if they are at home. For example, memorizing verses, coloring, recycling used goods, planting, helping parents etc.
5. If there are children who are difficult to reach due to internet or *smartphone* constraints, the teacher makes a visit but still complies with health protocols and with the consent of parents and the surrounding environment is not in self-isolation due to the Covid-19 case.

#### *Limited In-Person Sunday School Service Strategy*

Two more years of the pandemic lasted in Indonesia. After the community participated in the government program, namely the first, second and third vaccines, covid-19 sufferers decreased. That means

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<sup>27</sup> Sari, "Modifikasi Layanan Sekolah Minggu Sebagai Wujud Gereja Ramah Anak Di Masa Pandemi."

Sunday schools can already be held *onsite*. Some things that teachers can do, namely:<sup>28</sup>

1. Preparing yourself not only teaching materials but also creativity that will be done so that the child is not bored and saturated after two years of not Sunday School *onsite*.
2. The activities carried out do not consume the energy of teachers and children excessively due to the use of masks in the room.
3. Set a shorter Sunday School worship time.
4. Pay attention to the number of children in the room, the Sunday School worship sessions to be held and the number of rooms used.
5. Implement covid-19 protocols before and while Sunday School is in progress.
6. Inform parents to prepare children who will take part in Sunday School worship *onsite* so that every child who participates in worship is in good health.
7. Have time to prepare teaching materials, pray fervently so that children have a longing to come to Sunday School and make the

atmosphere more cheerful, vibrant, and family.

8. If it is found that there is a child who looks gloomy, not cheerful, and lazy to worship, the teacher can call the child and pray and ask things that make the child look gloomy.
9. Prepare props to tell the story of God's Word. According to Kadarmento, the use of teaching aids is the right strategy for teachers to attract children's attention.<sup>29</sup> The use of props makes children quicker to grasp the story of God's Word because there is something they see or see, which makes children bigger in giving their attention to the story of God's Word.

#### *Creative, innovative, and interactive learning*

Various ways to organize an interactive and interesting Sunday School for children must be continuously pursued, so as not to get bored while participating in existing learning.<sup>30</sup> For this reason, a competent, capable, creative, and innovative teacher is needed to create interesting learning for Sunday School children. A professional teacher must also

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<sup>28</sup> Widiyanto and Nostry, "Strategi Pelayanan Guru Sekolah Minggu Bagi Pertumbuhan Rohani Anak."

<sup>29</sup> Sutrisno and Christiani Hutabarat, "Orang Tua Dan Teman Bermain Terhadap Perkembangan

Sosial Anak," *QUAERENS: Journal of Theology and Christianity Studies* 1, no. 1 (2019): 28–55.

<sup>30</sup> Olaore et al., "Artificial Intelligence (AI): The Christian Perspective."

have a commitment to carrying out his duties as an educator, then continue to upgrade himself so that he has mastered in depth the learning materials.<sup>31</sup>

Creative Sunday School learning will appeal to children. This interest makes children like and enjoy worship.<sup>32</sup> Children will learn God's Word with sincerity in worship, the whole series of activities are well followed, so that they experience growth in their spiritual life.<sup>33</sup>

### **Children's Spiritual Growth**

*The Children Believes Jesus Christ Is His Savior*

Through the Sunday School ministry, children are taught to understand that they are sinful human beings who need forgiveness from the Lord Jesus. They believed that the Lord Jesus was the only Savior. Children can understand what God wants in their lives, which is to live according to God's Word. Children grow spiritually toward perfection just like Jesus, that growth is done entirely by the Holy Spirit.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Christiani Hutabarat and Bobby Kurnia Putrawan, "Pengantar Pola Asuh Orang Tua Dalam Keluarga Kristen," *PNEUMATIKOS: Jurnal Teologi Kependetaan* 11, no. 2 (2021): 84–94, <https://stapin.ac.id/e-journal/index.php/pneumatikos/article/view/28>.

<sup>32</sup> T. P. Efata, *80 Aktivitas Kreatif Untuk Sekolah Minggu & Persekutuan Remaja Pemuda* (Yogyakarta: Andi Offset, 2001).

### *Have a Character Like Jesus*

In Sunday school children not only learn to memorize Bible verses but they learn the character of Christ, which can later be practiced in everyday life. The implementation of character education must involve all parties, both churches, families, schools, and the wider community. Therefore, churches, schools, and families as an environment of character building and education must be more empowered.<sup>35</sup> Through Sunday School ministry children receive guidance, upbringing, and direction from an early age to learn and live according to the truth of God's Word.

The truths of God's Word taught will affect the character of a child who can be built up and strengthened through Sunday School ministry, and they can even become individuals who truly love God and the life used to serve God. Let us take the children to Sunday School to have faith and quality living character before God and his fellowmen. As the Lord Jesus said in Matthew 19:14 who always welcomes children, "Let them not prevent them from

<sup>33</sup> Widiyanto and Nostry, "Strategi Pelayanan Guru Sekolah Minggu Bagi Pertumbuhan Rohani Anak."

<sup>34</sup> Pattinama, "Peranan Sekolah Minggu Dalam Pertumbuhan Gereja."

<sup>35</sup> Sutrisno et al., "Christian Religious Education Toward The Teenagers Character Building," *Evangelikal: Jurnal Teologi Injili dan Pembinaan Warga Jemaat* 5, no. 2 (2021): 202–212.

coming unto me; for such were such people who possessed the Kingdom of heaven.”<sup>36</sup>

#### *Next Generation or Leaders of the Church*

Sunday School children see exemplary figures of teachers or spiritual coaches. Mary Go Setiawan argues that the next generation of coaches, means also fostering church leaders in the future, if Sunday School succeeds in fostering the next generation of spirituality well, it means having trained and prepared church leaders for the future.<sup>37</sup> They are not easily carried away because they already have the foundation of faith laid in childhood.<sup>38</sup> Children became diligent in praying and reading God's Word, even as they were teenagers already involved in church ministry.

#### **CONCLUSION**

The Covid-19 pandemic may hit this world, but God's ministry must continue. Special service to children. Sunday School teachers' strategies for serving the Lord are very diverse. Sunday School ministry isn't always about state-of-the-art technological venues or facilities. Teachers can hold visits but still with health protocols, send stories

of God's Word, Bible verses and creativity to children in the form of *photocopies* and children can return with a response on a piece of paper even with other ministry strategies. Teachers can work with parents to serve children. The point is that no reason can be made to stop god's ministry in Sunday School.

The Sunday school teacher is called not for reasons from himself, it must be remembered that it is God who gives the heart to love children. This allows teachers to be willing to sacrifice to do the best for God and others. It is the willingness of the heart from God that makes a Sunday school teacher, excited and responsible in serving.

Sunday school teachers must believe that service done with a heart full of willingness will have a tremendous impact on the child's life. The holy Spirit will grow the seeds of God's Word sown so that the child continues to grow in God. Children have a longing to worship, practice God's Word in their lives, realize the gifts and talents God has given them and give themselves to serve God. This is God's purpose in calling a teacher in Sunday school ministry to prepare the next

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<sup>36</sup> Siswoyo, “Sekolah Minggu Sebagai Sarana Dalam Membentuk Iman Dan Karakter Anak.”

<sup>37</sup> Mary Go Setiawan, *Pertumbuhan Mengajar* (Bandung: Yayasan Kalam Hidup, 1993).

<sup>38</sup> Tanto Kristiono and Deo Putra Perdana, “Hambatan Guru Dan Pelayanan Sekolah Minggu Di Gereja Kristen Jawa Jebres Surakarta,” *JURNAL TEOLOGI GRACIA DEO* 1, no. 2 (January 2019): 90–100.

generation who have a great impact on God, his family, his nation and society.

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