



Effective Pattern of Ministry according to Matthew 19:14 and its Relevance to the Minister of the Child in the Local Church

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Abstract

As the imbalance in children's spiritual development, this research investigates the pattern of successful ministry for children's ministry according to Matthew 19:14, so that the church provides maximum attention to children's ministry. In order to obtain the most information possible, this study employs a hermeneutic approach to qualitative research, which includes literary and biblical studies. The study's results indicate that educating children is critical, since children are the Church's and the nation's next generation and so require a solid foundation.

Keywords: *Child Ministry; Children Spiritual Development; Local Church*

Introduction

It is necessary for individuals to offer care and attention to people of all ages, especially children, as part of the Church's formation. The age of children is frequently the last to receive attention and does not receive special ministry, resulting in the church losing the next generation in the future. To avoid this situation, the local church must be able to accommodate all types of services that are available, including the ministry to children.

A doctor as well as the first female anthropologist in Italy, whose works have had a tremendous influence on the world of preschool education around the world, namely Dr. Maria Montessori (1870 – 1952), once said that childhood is the richest period, this time should be utilized by education as well as possible, if this life is wasted, it will never be replaced.

Early childhood which we can also call early childhood. According to the National Association of Education for Young Children (NAEYC), early childhood is a group of individuals who are in the age range 0-8 years. Early childhood is a group of people who are in the process of growth and development. At that age the experts call Him a Golden Age which only occurs once in the development of human life. The growth and development of early childhood needs to be directed at a balanced physical, cognitive, socio-emotional, linguistic, and creative foundation as laying the right foundation for the formation of a complete personality.

Furthermore, NAEYC (1992) found that the early days of life were His times of learning with His slogan: “Early Years are Learning Years”. This is due to the fact that during the early childhood years, children experience very fast and rapid growth and development in various aspects. In this period, almost all children's potentials experience a sensitive period to grow and develop rapidly and great children in their golden age in the stage of child development showing special characters (Homrighausen & Enklaar, 1969).

Home: 55 Life Skills Activities by Kusumo (2016), in the first plane, children show special characteristics. Such :

- a) Golden times when children absorb everything like a sponge (absorbent mind period).
- b) Children need regularity, sharpening of the five senses, fine and gross motor stimulation, more easily grasping something concrete, and the opportunity to do things on their own.
- c) An important period of developmental exploration and growth of physiology.
- d) Children's minds are so easy to absorb information and imitate what they see. Therefore, parents must be careful in speaking and acting.

The results of research in the field of neurology conducted by Benjamin S. Bloom, an education expert from the University of Chicago, United States (Diktentis, 2003: 1), suggests that the growth of brain tissue cells in children aged 0-4 years reaches 50%, until the age of 8 years reaches 80%. As a result, childhood from the age of 0-8 years is called the golden age which only occurs once in the development of human life so it is very important to stimulate the growth of children's brain intelligence by paying attention to children's health, providing adequate nutrition, and educational services.

The problem that arises is: How can the spiritual formation of early childhood be carried out? Based on the research conducted by Benjamin S. Bloom, which has been explained above, it is very important to stimulate the growth of brain intelligence, one of which is through educational services. The formation of early childhood spirituality can be done through Christian Religious Education services which are an effort of work between God and humans on a regular, systematic and continuous basis (Priyanto, 2014).

According to Law No. 20 of 2003 on the National Education System, education is a defined as a planned effort to create a learning environment and process that enable students to actively develop their potential for religious spiritual strength, self-control, personality, intelligence, noble character, and skills required by Him and the Public.

According to Teguh Triwiyanto, education is an attempt to arouse something in humans through the provision of structured learning experiences in the form of formal, non-formal, and informal education at school and outside of school that last a lifetime and are aimed at optimizing individual abilities in order for them to play a meaningful role in life in the future (Teguh, 2014).

Additionally, Law no. 20 of 2003 concerning national education system, states that types of education are divided into 3 parts, namely: formal education, non-formal education, and informal education. Thus, non-formal education provided by the church, as a spiritual institution, bears the same obligation for equipping children during their formative years. As a result, this golden era must be preserved correctly to ensure that children receive optimal attention.

Research Method

A library research methodology is used extensively in this paper, and in order to gather information about the title that the author wishes to investigate, the author must first collect a large number of books that are related to this paper, and then these books must be studied and examined using a library research methodology.

Discussion

1. The Importance of Ministry for Children

In Indonesia, the children population is relatively significant in comparison to the adult population. Children aged 0-4 years have a population of 22072.5 million, while children aged 5-9 years have a population of 22094.4 million, according to the 2020 Central Statistics Agency. These statistics remain higher as compared to the adult population, which reaches a peak of 21094.5 million people between the ages of 30 and 34. We can see a tremendous potential to promote the gospel and tell others tales about the Lord Jesus and the reality of God's Word to children at an early age to secure their future. We must not overlook Jesus' critical message, which states: "*In the same manner, your heavenly Father does not wish for any of these children to perish.*" (Matthew 18:14).

Childhood is the foundation for the future; it is the most remembered and vivid phase of life. Children also possess the capacity for acceptance; imitation, especially mimicking instruction, is quite strong, which underscores the critical nature of evangelizing children from an early age.

The Bible teaches that spiritual ministry for children is very important. In the Old Testament, God commanded His people to educate their children to truly know and respect and obey God. "*You must teach it over and over again to your children and talk about it when you sit in your house, when you are traveling, when you lie down, and when you get up*" (Deuteronomy 6: 4 – 9).

This means that parents must teach their children over and over again, under any conditions and at any time. The right education will bring tangible results in children's lives. "*Train up your child, and he will give you rest and bring you joy* (Proverbs 29:17)". Education must really be considered by children so that later they become wise. "*Hear the instruction, and you will become wise*" (Proverbs 8:33).

In Matthew 19:14 (NIV) However, Jesus said that, "Leave the children alone, do not prevent them from coming to me; for such is the kingdom of heaven."

Therefore, if examined closely, these words of Jesus are based on the background where at that time Jesus was carrying out a fairly tiring ministry because of teaching, casting out demons, healing the sick and continuing to travel everywhere to preach the Kingdom of God.

Jesus had made many journeys by that time, departing from Galilee and arriving in Judea and on the way to Jerusalem. In a situation that is so crowded, and tired suddenly people come with children, they want the children to be prayed for and blessed by Jesus. It could be that the people who came with the children were the parents of the children themselves and the number of parents who brought their children was not only 1 or 2 parents who came to Jesus with His children, or even more than 2 people which is can be seen by numerous people followed Jesus. Jesus can be said to be like a giant magnet that is able to attract people to flock to follow Him. The ministry that Jesus did touched the hearts of many people so that people willingly flocked to follow Jesus wherever Jesus went.

But Jesus' disciples forbade the old man to come close to Jesus even if only for a moment. It is even said that Jesus' disciples rebuked the people. We do not know how Jesus' disciples scolded those people, for sure Jesus' disciples did not want Jesus to be disturbed by children (Matt 19:13). For some people, these are small things that Jesus does not need to do.

His disciples were still able to do if only to pray for the children, maybe Jesus' disciples wanted to protect His Master so that His time would not be disturbed or worried if Jesus became unfocused with His ministry. Or it may also consider healing and teaching more important than blessing children. From this incident, it is very possible that the students think that children are not important to pay attention to.

2. God Is Angry if Anyone Prevents the Children from Coming to Him

How did Jesus respond when he saw the children brought by their parents to come closer to Jesus? did Jesus thank His disciples for giving them a moment to rest from a tiring journey of ministry? No, even Jesus rebuked His disciples and allowed the children to come. Jesus could have told His disciples to pray for and bless the children. However, Jesus was angry and said to them "Let the children alone, do not prevent them from coming to Me; how good and glad Jesus received children. Jesus did not care about feeling tired and busy in His ministry. He is not bothered by children, but He makes time for children and is very happy to meet them.

From these words of Jesus, it can be concluded how important He is and how precious is the position of children before Jesus. The children who were full of joy were invited by His parents to meet Jesus. It could be that some of the children have heard of who Jesus is through stories from their parents, some may have seen Jesus for the first time when their parents brought them to meet Jesus, and it could be that the children idolize Jesus. So that when they were brought by their parents they did not refuse to come and even wanted to be invited in groups or flocks to meet Jesus, if we imagine the atmosphere at that time was very crowded, sunny weather can make children hot and thirsty, also some people still have to wait for the time to get closer to Jesus because in the previous verse Jesus had a conversation with the Pharisees who tried to tempt Jesus with various questions (Matt 19:3-12). Perhaps, their house is quite far and the children have to walk to meet Jesus, and it could be that the journey is very long and a little tiring for the children.

3. Children Were Greatly Respected in Jesus' Eyes.

Furthermore, Jesus said that "*for such people to whom the kingdom of heaven belongs*". The kingdom of God in Matthew's Gospel is often refers to a glory. The kingdom of God is a concept that Jesus used to show His peace and justice in the life to come. The kingdom of God is an atmosphere in which there is joy, peace, justice, and equality (Guthrie, 1991). In several passages in the Gospel of Matthew, the owners of the kingdom of God are not Bible scholars or traditional elders. However, the owners of the kingdom of God are those who humble themselves like a child. Children are depicted as humble and sincere people who selflessly do something.

Jesus mentioned the identity of children as "*such people to whom the kingdom of heaven belongs*". In Mark 10:15 Jesus said that, "*Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like little children will not enter it*". Then Jesus embraced them (Mark 10:16), blessed them and prayed for them.

MATTHEW 18:1-6 1

At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked Him, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" So, Jesus called a little boy and put him in the midst of them and said: "Truly I tell you, unless you repent and become like little children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. As for

whoever humbles himself and becomes like this little child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven."

Here we see Jesus highly values children and gives them a very high identity, namely the person who owns the Kingdom of Heaven and as a model for how we should welcome God's Kingdom as new children can enter into it. Besides that, if we look at Matthew's notes, we will find children so precious in the eyes of the Lord Jesus.

1. You want to enter the kingdom of God, repent and become like little children (Matthew 18:1-3)
2. You want to be the greatest in the kingdom of Heaven, humble yourself and be like a little child (Matthew 18:4)

4. Why Serving the Children

1) Serving Children Is a Command from God Himself.

Deuteronomy 6:4 - 9 "...What I command you today you must pay attention to, you must teach it over and over to your children and talk about it when you are sitting in your house, when you are traveling, when you lie down and when you wake up. You are also to tie it as a sign on your hands and it is to be a symbol on your forehead, and you are to write it on the doorposts of your houses and on your gates.

Children need to be introduced to the way of Salvation in the Lord Jesus. Teaching God's Word to children has countless benefits. Children also need to be educated to live in the light of God's Word. Many experts have proven that a person's life experiences in his childhood will have a great and decisive influence on his adult life.

2) Saving the Generations

The development of multimedia is so rapid and has succeeded in grabbing children's attention. Many negative impacts that can affect children. Violent television shows, etc. There is a positive side, but on the other hand, multimedia can be a crushing machine for a child's future. (Edy Sulystiono, nd) We serve children because we want to save and prepare the next generation to become a generation that knows God and lives in God's way. By serving our children we also train and prepare the younger generation and the next generation of the Church.

Child ministry is a duty and responsibility from God. This task is a noble work that God has given to His people who are called to the ministry of children. Being a child servant is not an easy thing to do. Child ministry requires a serious and committed heart. The purpose of children's ministry is to bring children to know Jesus and accept Jesus as Lord and Savior and help them have a relationship with God so that they grow spiritually.

3) Children need the Gospel

In many parts of life, the evolution of the times causes youngsters to lose their way. They are affected by a variety of false doctrines spread across numerous social media platforms. Today's parents pay less attention to their children because of their hectic schedules and the competitive nature of their lives, which causes families to place a greater emphasis on financial success than on family unity and fellowship with their children. As a result of their desire for parental affection, many youngsters become victims of materialism, drugs, and promiscuity. Given the facts and figures shown above, it is evident that what children truly require is good news, or the gospel. Preaching the gospel to children by taking a

comprehensive and intact approach to their situations and needs. Children get holistic good news because they have Christian parents, Christian instructors, and Christian adults who love them unconditionally, meet their needs, and allow them to experience the love of the Lord Jesus, who offers comfort. As a result, we are training children's hearts to be wide open for the Lord Jesus to come into their hearts as their personal Lord and Savior.

4) Children must be the reach of the Great Commission

In Matthew 28 : 19 - 20

"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations and baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teach them to do all things that I have commanded you. And know that I am with you."

The duty of parents and educators is to carry out deep and strong spiritual services or development so as to produce quality children. These very valuable qualities of children not only make children easy to accept the gospel so as to encourage the growth of believers in quantity, but they also have qualities as very effective mission agents. For example in the Bible, there are figures such as Isaac, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, Samuel, David, Timothy who were prepared from an early age to carry out God's mission. God's mission is to make all nations disciples of God.

At the World Mission congregation meeting in Pattaya Thailand, Paul Eschelmann asked the 1700 church leaders from around the world who had gathered. The result is that more than 60% of them stand up when asked if they believe in Jesus in the age range of 4 -14 years.(Brewster, 2005). Thus, the quality of children who easily accept the gospel will at the same time encourage the growth of the quantity of children who become believers

5).Values that need to be taught in the ministry of children

A. Bible-centered Ministry

According to 2 Tim 3:16 *"All writings that are inspired by God are useful for teaching, for revealing mistakes, for correcting behavior and for educating people in the truth"*.

The Bible is the most special book ever written. The Bible is a book, written by man, and inspired by God. Christians accept it in its entirety as the Word of God. The Bible is the main source that should be the main basis and guide in teaching. Therefore, to teach well the teacher must study the Bible systematically and master the outline of the contents of the Bible. If the teacher does not have sufficient knowledge of the Bible, it will be difficult for the teacher to judge whether the teaching principles given to children are in accordance with the truth of God's word or not.

The Bible is the center of learning, so every adult, both church and school, who do ministry to children will always connect the subject of study with the Bible and direct children to have an increasing understanding of Christ. The teacher will guide the child to understand a lesson from a biblical perspective, for example: studying the life cycle of a butterfly. After the students observe the life cycle of the butterfly, the teacher will direct the students to think about who actually created the butterfly. Teachers have an obligation to direct students to know God who created the world and everything in it. Hence, students not only understand a new knowledge about the life cycle of butterflies but also build awareness and character to learn to appreciate and be grateful for God's creation. For this reason, it is necessary to have lessons that are integrated with the Bible in Christian education.

B. The Role Of Parents And Teachers

Proverbs 22:6 *"Train up a young man in the way that is right for him, and in his old age he will not stray from it."*

The mandate to educate children from God was given primarily to parents, then to teachers. Christian education will work effectively if parents and teachers are God-fearing people, who truly understand, teach, and live from a biblical perspective. The main goal of a Christian teacher is to guide students to know and believe in the absolute truth, the Savior, namely Jesus Christ.

Mavis L. Anderson, (1993) in his relationship with educating or teaching, said: "The word educate means "to lead or guide the formation of habits that lead to skill", on the path that must be taken, has a broader meaning than just imparting knowledge. the theory of as much as possible into the hearts of unprepared disciples with one hope that someday at the end of this long journey, the disciple will arrive at the right destination. This means guiding and training that life under the care of the Spirit of God, so that step by step, he is led to the moment when he accepts Him who is "the way and the truth and the Life" (John 14:6)"(Mavis L, 1993)

A biblical Christian educator will have the view that every child is created in the image and likeness of God, and each of them must have unique gifts and talents.

A Christian Educator is a person who is faithful to educate, teach, and guide His students towards a better and responsible direction, providing knowledge about the Bible and Christ as the eternal Savior in human life. Therefore, the teacher should be an example that draws people to Christ, He should be able to reflect the Spirit of Christ throughout His Person.

C. Education Services In School

According to Iris V. Cully (1995:2) "school is an environment where children of every generation are taught about what is expected and demanded by a culture". This can be done through teaching and setting an example (teacher's attitude or behavior in accordance with Christian teachings) (Cully, 2009). Exemplary is a way of educating through good behavior from every Christian educator or teacher at school that will influence students or students at school. Whereas teaching involves empowering the individual intellect to improve body, mind and spirit. This does not mean that exemplary does not involve the mind and soul. Thoughts are very necessary in life because with that thought then everyone applies what he knows in his life behavior.

According to Warner Graedorf, Christian religious education is "a process of teaching and learning that is based on God, Christ-centered, and dependent on the Holy Spirit that guides each individual at all stages of growth through teaching today toward knowing and experiencing God's plan and will through Christ in life. every aspect of life, and equipping them for effective ministry, centered on Christ the Great Teacher and the maturing commandment of the disciple (Graenddorf, 1981).

Based on the explanation above, it becomes clear that in education there are two interactions, namely adults who in the context of school are called teachers and minors who in the context of formal schools are called students. In Christian education in schools, the role of teachers is needed. In belief, students need Christian teachers who can provide good teaching and role models.

School is an institution that is used for learning activities for educators and is a place to give and receive lessons in accordance with their field. School is one of the places to educate children with the intention of providing the knowledge that is given so that they are able to become human beings who are useful for the nation and the country. Schools have a very important role in the life of the nation.

Ratna Megawangi, executive director of the Indonesia Heritage Foundation's Holistic Education Development Institute, said that educating children to have character requires a "carving" process, namely through proper parenting and education. Therefore, it must be done since the child is born or from an early age. To make it happen for preschoolers, they need to be educated and introduced to aspects of benevolent behavior, taught moral values, and even empathy for the difficulties and sufferings of others (Mangoenprasodjo & Hidayati, 2005).

Discussion Result

In Deuteronomy 6:4-9 we can see the teaching method used by the Israelites was perseverance by teaching / conveying messages repeatedly in various forms.

- The role of parents in the family is so important because the child's first educational institution is in the family.
- Familiarize children from childhood to pray in the name of Jesus, read, explore and listen to God's Word, teach in quiet times, be invited to church, and hold family services every day in the family.
- Parents must be able to be a good role model.
- Christian education must be able to introduce God to children through appropriate media learning.
- Christian education must be able to bring children closer to God.
- Christian education contributes to transforming children's lives.

Children who become believers from an early age will be very effective in many ways: time to serve God. If they have believed from an early age, then their time to serve will be much longer, better quality of faith and spirituality. If they have believed from an early age, there will be more opportunities to educate them in faith and spirituality so that they are expected to produce a better quality of faith and spirituality. An increase in the number of believers, such as: if the believing child finally brings His non-believing family members to believe, the number of believers will increase.

How is an effective ministry for early childhood

1. Pray that God will give you wisdom, the right time and the right method to use. We can equip ourselves with various Child Evangelism Ministry Trainings
2. For early children, read the Bible with pictures. Children will not feel bored hearing the Bible repeated over and over again.
3. Last but not least, it is equally important for children so that the gospel can be well received, namely through service to children holistically. We nurture, educate and raise with love. Thus they can see our lives as Christian adults that reflect the love of Jesus.

Conclusion

Based on the findings and discussions above, we no longer underestimate the value of serving children, especially in early life, since we have seen the importance of service to children. It is

impossible for early children to face their spiritual development in their own power. As a result, children, particularly those in their early childhood, require adult guidance. This makes adults (parents and teachers) even better equipped to serve children in a more innovative and loving manner. Children are incredibly important and valuable to God, and it is a privilege to be entrusted with the ministry of children. They have a very long time to witness and serve God if they start serving children early and eventually become believers in the Lord Jesus. Children are the next generation to spread the gospel to the rest of the world. Nevertheless, the devil does not remain quiet; in today's contemporary society, children's attention is attracted through social media, games, and so on. As a matter of fact, let us take a more serious approach to raising children to know God, develop in faith, have a real understanding of God, and experience God in their life.

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