

(Research) Article

Tap Learning Model as an Effort to Build the Perfect Character of the Congregation of the Voice of Truth Gospel Church in Medan

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Abstract. *The aim of this study is to develop and produce findings on an effective teaching model to build the perfect character of the congregation of the Suara Sejati Gospel Church in Medan. The research method used in this study is a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach. The data sources used in this study are a semi-structured interview guide and field notes. The data analysis technique used in this study involves several steps, namely bracketing, horizontalization, phenomenological reduction, and synthesis of essential meaning. The results of the study indicate that: The congregation and servants of God GSKI in Medan City identified several key attributes in achieving perfect character which include high moral quality, holiness, commitment to following God's will, and growth in faith through deepening the Word and fellowship; The congregation of GSKI in Medan City faces several major challenges in building perfect character according to the teachings of Matthew 5:48, such as limitations in understanding the teachings of the Bible and incomplete doctrines, worldly influences and attachment to worldly pleasures, and the lack of consistent role models from church leaders; An effective teaching model for building perfect character based on Matthew 5:48 in the context of the GSKI congregation in Medan City consists of a structured teaching approach, practical and contextual application, and role models and leadership; An effective teaching model for building perfect character based on Matthew 5:48 is a model that is transformative, andragogical, and empowering. This study produces the TAP Model (Transformation - Andragogy - Empowerment) which includes the stages of introduction, reflection, practice, as well as evaluation and mentoring. This model encourages active congregational involvement, connects the Word with real life, and forms character through a contextual and spiritual learning process.*

Keywords: Perfect Character; Learning Model; TAP Model; Transformation; Andragogy

1. BACKGROUND

Theology is an effort made by humans consciously to be able to know and understand the person of God whom they worship, and in order for someone to know and understand the person of God whom they worship, systematic and constructed teaching is needed. Theology and the Church are basically two things that cannot be separated, because the presence of the Church in this world cannot be separated from things that talk about God so that all people (in general) and all believers (in particular) can know correctly about the true God who is in accordance with what is written in the Bible (Ritonga, 2020).

The importance of teaching in the Church is based on what Jesus conveyed through the Great Commission, where in the Great Commission, Jesus said: "and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:20); Apart from that, the importance of teaching in Christianity can also be seen through the teachings that Jesus did (Sirait, 2019). Teaching about perfect character is one of the themes that Jesus conveyed to His listeners, and this can be seen in Matthew 5:48 which reads: "Therefore you must be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect". Regarding this verse, Carson (1995: 18) states that it is not

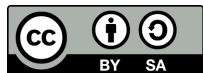
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just high ethics that Jesus taught, but an invitation to grow in the likeness of God, especially in the manifestation of unlimited and selfless love.

The perfect character taught by Jesus should be the standard or benchmark for every believer in their life, but in reality many no longer make God's word their main guideline, but instead rely on their own understanding and will (not in line with the truth of God's Word) (Harry, 2022: 143-60). Problems related to life that are often not in line with the truth of God's Word also occur in the lives of several congregations in the environment of the Gospel Truth Church (GSKI) in Medan, and based on the results of initial observations it is known that there are several things that are the main causes or roots of this problem, such as: Inconsistent doctrinal understanding; Worldly influences and attachment to worldly pleasures; Lack of role models and leadership; Professions and educational backgrounds of the congregation who mostly work as factory employees, traders, and farmers, with the majority having an education level only up to high school.

The problems that occur in the GSKI congregation in Medan City are things that need serious attention from the Church, because if this is left alone it will result in the emergence of characters that are not in accordance with the truth of God's Word, and to overcome this problem, it is important for the ministry and servants of God to teach the congregation regarding what Jesus taught regarding the character that God wants to be in the life of every believer. The purpose of this study is to develop and produce findings of an effective teaching model to build the perfect character of the congregation of the Suara Sejati Injil Church in Medan.

2. THEORETICAL BASIS

Perfect character

Character is the most fundamental factor that plays a crucial role in shaping a person's personality, and within it are the moral and ethical values taught and implemented in the social environment (Sirait, 2019). Quoting Thomas Lickona, a character education expert, character is "a conscious effort to help someone understand and practice core ethical values" (Khodijah et al., 2024: 410-17). Perfect character, according to Lickona (1992: 142) is a series or integration that exists within a person that can produce an individual with high morals, and the integration that exists within a person includes moral knowledge (moral knowing), moral feeling (moral feeling), and moral action (moral action).

Warren (2003: 43), in his popular book *The Purpose Driven Life*, explains that "God is more interested in shaping our character than in providing us with comfort." Character, according to Warren, is formed through various life situations, including challenges and suffering, which test perseverance and faith. From this perspective, the formation of perfect character is part of true discipleship, where every believer is called to live a life of holiness, integrity, and love that reveals the identity of Christ within them. In line with Warren's opinion above, Chambers & Reimann (2006: 54) states that the main goal of life is not to be a successful person, but to become a person who resembles Christ, and this is only possible through complete obedience to God's will.

Teaching Models in Character Formation

Theology, as the science of God and His relationship with humanity, cannot be taught like the exact sciences, which rely solely on logic and memorization. It requires an approach that bridges the gap between *logos* (word) and *bios* (life). Therefore, a teaching model for character formation in theology can be based on:

a. Andragogy Approach.

The term andragogy comes from the Greek *aner* (adult) and *agogos* (to guide), and was introduced systematically by Knowles (1984: 54) as opposed to child-oriented pedagogy. Within the context of theology, andragogy recognizes that the growth of faith in adult believers is not simply the result of doctrinalization, but rather a dynamic, existential process involving lived experience, spiritual reflection, and active engagement in Christian practice. In the practice of theological education, andragogy can be applied through methods such as reflective dialogue, case studies, project-based learning, narratives of faith experiences, learning circles, and the integration of spiritual practices (Kolb, 2015: 98).

In the church, andragogy is a key approach to the formation of adult congregations. Many churches remain fixated on pedagogical models: one-way sermons, rigid dogmatic classes, or catechisms that test memorization. However, mature believers need space to ask questions, discuss, share their faith, and integrate God's Word into the challenges of everyday life. Andragogy encourages churches to create collaborative, empathetic, and relevant learning environments where congregants can grow in mature faith and bear fruit in Christlike character.

b. Empowerment Approach

The empowerment approach to teaching positions students as active subjects with the potential, dignity, and capacity to develop independently. Empowerment in teaching aims to increase students' abilities, self-confidence, and active participation in the learning process. Through empowerment, teachers not only transfer knowledge but also encourage students to become independent and creative learning subjects (Mujahidah et al., 2024: 122).

Theologically, the concept of empowerment has deep roots in the ministry of Jesus Christ. Throughout His earthly ministry, Jesus not only taught but also empowered His disciples to be His servants and witnesses in the world. He gave His followers power (*exousia*) and authority (*dynamis*) so they could cast out demons, heal the sick, and preach the gospel (Luke 9:1-2). Jesus did not create dependence, but rather independence sustained by the power of the Holy Spirit. This is the model of transformative teaching: shaping character, equipping potential, and encouraging mature spiritual independence in God's mission (Stone and Duke, 2023: 78). In today's church, empowerment is a crucial principle in every form of teaching: whether in the pulpit, discipleship classes, cell groups, or seminars. The congregation is no longer treated as passive objects receiving teachings from above, but rather as a people who must be involved in active learning, decision-making, and real service. An effective church in its teaching is one that trains each of its members to be the

salt and light of the world through a consistent, authentic, and Christ-based empowerment process.

c. Interactive and Transformational Approach

The Interactive and Transformational Approach to Christian learning is a teaching approach that emphasizes active student involvement and profound life change as a result of the learning process. In Christian education, this approach aims not only to transfer theological knowledge but also to guide students toward spiritual growth and character change in harmony with Christ. This approach combines dialogic, technology participatory, and reflective elements so that students are not merely passive recipients but active partners in the process of forming Christian faith and morality (Sirait *et al.*, 2023).

Interactive approaches to Christian learning are heavily influenced by the Socratic approach and dialogical pedagogy proposed by Paulo Freire, who views education as a liberating dialogue. In Christianity, this dialogue is not only between teacher and student, but also between God's Word and the student's conscience. Therefore, the teacher or educator functions as a spiritual facilitator who leads students to discover truth through personal reflection, group interaction, and practical application to their lives. This approach reflects what Jesus did in His ministry, namely through conversation, rhetorical questions, and personal interventions that touched the hearts of His listeners (cf. Matthew 16:13–20; John 4:7–26) (Freire, 1970: 176).

Meanwhile, the transformational approach to Christian education is based on the belief that God's Word and the work of the Holy Spirit have the power to transform lives. Transformation is the primary goal, not merely cognitive mastery. This process occurs when learning encourages students to experience a renewed mindset (Rom. 12:2), true repentance, and ethical actions that reflect Christ's love (Pazmiño, 2012: 107). The application of interactive and transformational methods is very relevant to be applied in today's church, especially in discipleship groups, categorical education, and faith formation classes.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

The research method used in this study is a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach. Qualitative research emphasizes the meaning of reality/phenomena that are occurring, and it is not research that uses numbers (Sugiyono, 2019: 18). The phenomenological research approach is a method in qualitative research that focuses on an in-depth understanding of an individual's life experiences related to a phenomenon (Husserl, 1970). The data sources used in this study are: First, a semi-structured interview guide used to explore the experiences and perceptions of informants in depth while remaining flexible in following the flow of conversation; Second, field notes were used to record non-verbal observations and contextual situations during the data collection process. The data analysis techniques used in this study involved several main steps, namely bracketing (*epoché*), horizontalization, phenomenological reduction, and synthesis of essential meaning (Moustakas, 1994).

4. RESEARCH RESULT

Challenges and Obstacles Faced by the GSKI Congregation in Medan City in Building Character in Accordance with the Teachings of Matthew 5:48

The results of this study indicate that the GSKI congregation in Medan City faces several major challenges in building a perfect character according to the teachings of Matthew 5:48, such as: First, Limited understanding of biblical teachings and incomplete doctrines result in difficulties in applying the principle of perfection in daily life. This opinion is in line with Dallas Willard's view (2006) which states that many congregations misunderstand the concept of Christian perfection due to a lack of adequate doctrinal formation. Willard explains that the perfection referred to in Matthew 5:48 is spiritual maturity and Christlikeness, not the complete absence of sin; Second, Worldly Influence and Attachment to Worldly Pleasures. John Stott (2012) states that worldly influences are often the greatest obstacle in a Christian's journey of holiness, especially when popular culture offers pleasures that conflict with biblical principles. Stott emphasizes the importance of spiritual disciplines such as prayer, meditation, and fellowship to strengthen faith in the face of worldly temptations; Third, the lack of consistent role models from church leaders can hinder the congregation from developing the desired character. Maxwell states that effective leadership in the church must begin with strong example. Christian leaders are called to live according to a higher standard and be role models for the congregation in Christlikeness (Maxwell, 1998).

Teaching Model for Building Perfect Character Based on Matthew 5:48 in the Context of the GSKI Congregation in Medan City

The findings of this study indicate that an effective teaching model for building perfect character based on Matthew 5:48 in the context of the GSKI congregation in Medan City consists of three main approaches: a structured teaching approach, practical and contextual application, and role model and leadership. These three approaches have proven effective in helping the congregation understand and apply the principles of perfection as taught in Matthew 5:48. This model is not only aligned with biblical principles but is also supported by Christian religious education theories that emphasize the importance of character transformation through planned and contextual teaching.

a. Structured teaching approach

A structured teaching approach involves a systematic, directed, and consistent teaching process in conveying the principles of perfection as outlined in Matthew 5:48. In the context of GSKI in Medan City, this approach is realized through intense and in-depth teaching, followed by counseling to help the congregation understand and apply the teachings practically in everyday life. The research findings show that consistency in teaching and counseling helps the congregation see every life problem as a means of spiritual growth. The findings also emphasize the importance of pure and continuous teaching about the correct doctrine, accompanied by an emphasis on repentance as the foundation in building a perfect character. This approach is in line with T. Groome's views (1980) in "Christian Religious Education: Sharing Our Story and Vision", which

emphasizes that effective Christian teaching must be systematic and consistent in conveying pure doctrine so that the congregation can understand and live out God's Word correctly; In addition, according to James Estep, Michael Anthony, and Gregg Allison(2008), structured teaching helps the congregation understand and apply Bible teachings more effectively in everyday life.

b. Practical and Contextual Application

Practical and contextual application involves adapting teachings to the context of congregational life and integrating spiritual principles into daily practice. Research shows that this approach helps congregations live out God's Word in every aspect of their lives. Church leaders emphasize the importance of living out God's Word at all times, having thoughts and feelings aligned with God's will, and using counseling to help congregations see each life challenge as an opportunity to grow in perfection.

This approach enables congregants to connect biblical teachings to their life situations, better preparing them to face various challenges with a sound spiritual perspective. Furthermore, relevant and contextual teaching helps congregants integrate biblical teachings into their daily lives, enabling them to live according to the principles of perfection taught in Matthew 5:48. This approach is supported by theories of religious education, as expressed by Parker Palmer (1998) in "The Courage to Teach", that effective teaching must be relevant to real life and encourage the congregation to live out God's Word in their daily lives; In addition, John Dewey(1938)emphasizes that contextual and real-life learning has proven effective in changing the character of the congregation, so that they can become more spiritually mature individuals.

c. Role Model and Leadership

Modeling and leadership emphasize the importance of church leaders living according to Christ's standard of perfection and setting a concrete example for their congregations. The study found that leaders who live out God's Word and practice it in their daily lives can inspire and exemplify the congregation in pursuing character perfection, as taught in Matthew 5:48. The interviewed church leaders emphasized that church leaders must be concrete role models, both in their actions and in their daily lives. They also recognized the importance of leadership that is responsive to the congregation's needs, including in dealing with emotional and financial difficulties. This way, the congregation feels supported and motivated to follow their leaders' example in pursuing character perfection. This model is in line with Robert E. Coleman's views (1994) in "The Master Plan of Evangelism", which emphasizes that the example of church leaders is very influential in shaping the character of the congregation, because the congregation tends to imitate the life and behavior of their leaders; In addition, according to James Kouzes and Barry Posner (2010), effective leadership in the context of the church also involves providing real examples in daily life, so that the congregation can see and follow examples of life that are in accordance with the teachings of Christ.

Model Development and New Models Generated (Novelty)

Based on the findings and discussion of the research results, it is evident that the perfect character teaching approach that only emphasizes the transfer of cognitive information is not effective enough in shaping the character of a spiritually mature congregation. Most respondents said that teaching that is only one-way tends not to touch on real-life aspects, and is unable to change their mindset and character in a profound way. Therefore, a new approach is needed that emphasizes active congregation involvement, practical relevance, and real life transformation. To address these needs, researchers developed and produced a new model called the TAP MODEL, an acronym for Transformation – Andragogy – Empowerment. This model was born from a synthesis of field findings and theories of adult education (andragogy), Christian spirituality, and the principles of character development in light of Matthew 5:48.

a. TAP Model Components

The TAP model consists of three main pillars, namely:

1) Transformation

The learning process is directed toward transforming the congregation's character into Christlikeness, not merely conceptual understanding. This aligns with the divine goal of character formation as stated in Matthew 5:48.

2) Andragogy

The learning process is designed with a typical adult approach (andragogy), namely based on experience, active participation, and contextual learning that touches on the daily life of the congregation.

3) Empowerment

Congregants are trained and mentored to grow independently in their spiritual lives. They are no longer completely dependent on pastors or church leaders, but are able to make mature moral decisions.

b. TAP Model Implementation Stages

The implementation of this model is designed in four systematic stages as follows:

Table 1. Implementation of the model in four systematic stages.

Stage	Objective	Strategy	Output
Introduction	Building awareness of the importance of character	A contextual and applicable exposition of Matthew 5:48	Spiritual awareness and motivation
Reflection	Connecting the word with the reality of life	Group discussions, experience sharing, case studies	Personal relevance and depth of appreciation
Practice	Applying values in life	Service projects, weekly spiritual assignments	Real changes in attitudes and Actions
Evaluation & Mentoring	Monitoring and growth support	Mentoring, spiritual coaching, weekly assessments	Spiritual independence and consistency of Christian life

c. Comparison of Old Model and TAP Model

Table 2. Comparison of Old Model and TAP Model.

Aspect	Conventional Model	TAP Model
Focus	Cognitive/Bible knowledge	Spiritual character transformation
The Role of the Congregation	Passive	Active, reflective and directly involved
Method	One-way lecture	Discussions, case studies, service practices
Final destination	Know the Word of God	Becoming like Christ
Relationship with Leaders	Depends	Empowered to be spiritually independent

5. CONCLUSION

The results of this study indicate that the GSKI congregation in Medan City faces several major challenges in building perfect character according to the teachings of Matthew 5:48, such as: First, Limited understanding of biblical teachings and incomplete doctrines result in difficulties in applying the principle of perfection in daily life; Second, Worldly Influence and Attachment to Worldly Pleasures; Third, Lack of consistent role models from church leaders can hinder the congregation in developing the desired character.

The findings of this study indicate that an effective teaching model for building perfect character based on Matthew 5:48 in the context of the GSKI congregation in Medan City consists of three main approaches: a structured teaching approach, practical and contextual application, and role modeling and leadership. These three approaches have proven effective in helping the congregation understand and apply the principles of perfection as taught in Matthew 5:48.

An effective teaching model for building perfect character based on Matthew 5:48 is transformative, andragogical, and empowering. This research resulted in the TAP (Transformation – Andragogy – Empowerment) Model, which includes the stages of introduction, reflection, practice, evaluation, and mentoring. This model encourages active congregational involvement, connects the Word to real life, and shapes character through a contextual and spiritual learning process.

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