



## The Efforts to Increase Children's Activeness in Responding to Stories from God's Word Using Discussion Method (Qualitative Study at the Sunday School of The Batu Hidup Christian Church, Jakarta)

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### **Abstract**

This study aims to explore the role of discussion methods in increasing the activity of small class children in understanding and applying the teachings of the Lord's word that the Sunday school teacher conveys. Discussion methods give children opportunities to interact, share opinions, and discuss the Lord's word stories with their peers. In this process of discussion, children can learn to understand and apply the teachings of the Lord's word in everyday life. This study uses qualitative methods. Collect data by direct observation and structured interviews with a Sunday school teacher. Studies indicate that effective discussion methods promote children's activation. Children involved in discussions are more actively participating, have better understanding, and are able to apply the teachings of the Lord's word in everyday life.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Sunday school is one part of implementing Christian education in the church. Likewise, the Batu Hidup Christian Church has made Sunday school one of its important programs in providing Christian education for children so that they can worship together with their parents at the Batu Hidup Christian Church. The Sunday school consists of three classes: adult, middle, and small (infants and toddlers). The aim of Sunday school is to provide an understanding of God's Word to children from an early age. Maitimoe in Pattinama argues that the special ministry of Sunday school in children's worship is to unite children on Sundays, conveying the Gospel of Christ in a specific way: worship, praise, and thanksgiving.<sup>1</sup> Apart from that, we also need to pay attention to

<sup>1</sup> Yenni Anita Pattinama, "Peranan Sekolah Minggu Dalam Pertumbuhan Gereja," *Jurnal Scripta Teologi Dan Pelayanan Kontekstual* 4, no. 2 (2019): 132–51.

their personality which also determines the success of the maturity of children's faith. <sup>2</sup> To achieve the goals of Sunday school, the discussion method is a crucial teaching method. It provides children with the opportunity to interact, share opinions, and discuss stories from God's Word with their peers.

Through these discussions, children can learn to understand and apply the teachings of God's Word in their daily lives. However, it's important to pay attention to how actively children participate in these discussions. Sometimes, some children may not actively participate in discussions, which can impact their understanding and application of God's Word in their lives. One of the opinions of a fellow GBKH Sunday school teacher is that when sharing God's Word with children, a teacher should engage with students in a question-and-answer session to foster a positive discussion, prevent students from becoming bored during the presentation and raise interest and motivation to learn.<sup>3</sup>

Therefore, it's important to explore the role of the discussion method in increasing the engagement of young children in understanding and applying the teachings of God's Word. By understanding the role of effective discussion methods, it can be hoped that the activeness of children in the Sunday School of the Batu Hidup Christian Church in Jakarta can increase, so that they can grow in faith and apply the life values taught by the Word of God.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

In this study, the author used a descriptive method to collect data on the role of discussion methods in increasing the activeness of young children in understanding and applying the teachings of God's Word. The descriptive method aims to describe the phenomenon or event being studied by systematically collecting, analyzing, and providing an interpretation of the phenomenon. The characteristics of the descriptive method are objectivity, systematic, descriptive and non-

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<sup>2</sup> Susan Bawole, "Tanggung Jawab Guru Sekolah Minggu Dalam Kehidupan Spiritual Anak," *Tumou Tou* 7, no. 2 (2020): 143–56.

<sup>3</sup> Supinah, "Fasilitator Keren Dengan Pilihan Metode Dan Teknik Pembelajaran Pada Pelatihan Bagi Generasi Milenial," *Jurnal Kewidyaiswaraan* 5, no. 2 (2020): 26–38.

experimental.<sup>4</sup> The research can provide existing data without using manipulation. The research was conducted through observation and interviews.<sup>5</sup>

This method was used to observe and describe children's active participation in the discussion method at the Batu Hidup Christian Church Sunday School in Jakarta. The researcher conducted participatory observation, directly participating in the children's discussion activities. This direct observation, conducted by the author, was conducted to gain a deeper understanding of how the discussion method was implemented, how the children participated, and how the understanding and application of the teachings of God's Word occurred in that context.

In this study, the researcher conducted structured interviews with Sunday School teachers to obtain information about their experiences using the discussion method, the challenges they faced, and the benefits they gained. These interviews helped to gain a broader perspective on the role of the discussion method in the context of the Batu Hidup Christian Church Sunday School in Jakarta.

By using descriptive methods, the researcher was able to systematically collect data, analyze it, and provide a detailed description of the role of the discussion method in increasing children's participation in understanding and applying the teachings of God's Word. Descriptive methods also allowed the researcher to interpret the research findings and make relevant recommendations for improving the practice of the discussion method in Sunday School.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Discussion Method**

Choosing the right teaching methods is a crucial skill for any teacher, including those in Sunday school. Basically, Sunday school is a stage in the formation of students' character.<sup>6</sup> Teachers must be able to analyze their students to adapt to the teaching methods they choose. Sidjabat, a prominent figure, stated that choosing the right teaching method should consider the age of the students. According to B. Suryosubroto, the discussion method is a way of presenting material in which teachers provide opportunities for students or groups to engage in scientific

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<sup>4</sup> Tegar Toha Putra and Zulmi Aryani, "Rancangan Media Pembelajaran Visual Sistem Pernapasan Pada Manusia Untuk Sekolah Dasar," *JlWA : Jurnal Inovasi Wawasan Akademik* 1, no. 3 (2025): 235–39.

<sup>5</sup> W Widiastuti and W Kania, "Penerapan Metode Diskusi Untuk Meningkatkan Kemampuan Berpikir Kritis Dan Pemecahan Masalah," *Jurnal Pendidikan Ekonomi Indonesia* 3, no. 1 (2021): 259–64.

<sup>6</sup> Heles Babawat, "Peran Guru Sekolah Minggu Dalam Membangun Fondasi Spiritual Anak Sekolah Minggu," *Jurnal Excelsior Pendidikan* 5, no. 1 (2024): 13–24, <https://doi.org/10.51730/jep.v5i1.56>.

discussions to gather opinions and reach conclusions, thus providing various ways to solve a problem.<sup>7</sup> Meanwhile, B. S. Sidjabat stated that the discussion method is a way to create two-way communication between teachers and vice versa.<sup>8</sup> The discussion method is an educational approach aimed at finding solutions to problems, involving two or more people who present arguments to support their respective views. Discussion is a way of presenting lessons to students who are faced with a case in the form of a problem-based question to be worked on and resolved together.

Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that the discussion method is a learning process that involves discussing pre-prepared questions, either individually or in groups, or through the teacher, to reach a mutual agreement on resolving the problem being discussed. Based on direct observations of the discussion method in the Sunday school, when delivering stories from God's Word, students do not form groups. The primary role here is the Sunday school teacher. The Sunday school teacher can provide stimulation to students by asking questions.

The purpose of the discussion method in learning activities is to encourage and stimulate students to think and convey their messages (reflective thinking).<sup>9</sup> In an increasingly democratic world of education, discussion methods are crucial for stimulating children's thinking and expressing their opinions freely and independently which will also be followed by a sense of self-confidence in students.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, teachers must possess strong skills as part of efforts to improve the quality of church education, particularly Sunday school. These skills refer to the teacher's ability to teach effectively and apply appropriate, effective, and efficient learning methods.

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<sup>7</sup> B Suryosubroto, *Proses Belajar Mengajar Di Sekolah* (Rineka Cipta, 2009), 167.

<sup>8</sup> B.S Sidjabat, *Mengajar Secara Profesional* (Kalam Hidup, 2011), 232.

<sup>9</sup> Selamat Karo-Karo, "Implementasi Metode Diskusi Kelompok Terhadap Hasil Belajar Siswa Pada Mata Pelajaran Pendidikan Agama Kristen," *Jurnal Pendidikan Religius* 4, no. 1 (2022): 1–14.

<sup>10</sup> Putu Nopi Soyandari *et al.*, "Penerapan Bimbingan Kelompok Dengan Teknik Diskusi Kelompok Untuk Meningkatkan Rasa Percaya Diri Siswa Kelas VIII E SMP Negeri 3 Singaraja Tahun Pelajaran 2013/2014," *JIBK : Jurnal Ilmiah Bimbingan Konseling Undiksha* 2, no. 1 (2014), <https://ejournal.undiksha.ac.id/index.php/JIBK/article/view/3880/3102>.

### **Types of Discussion Methods**

When conveying God's Word to students, a teacher should be familiar with various discussion methods so they can adapt the type of discussion they use. The types of methods that should be implemented in teaching <sup>11</sup> include:

1. Informal Discussion

This method differs from the first method because it allows for informal discussions. This type of discussion is typically used in family discussions, group learning, and other settings.

2. Formal Discussion

This type of discussion method is typically used in government or semi-government institutions that involve government officials. Participants attending this activity are given the opportunity to express their opinions with permission from the moderator to maintain order.

3. Panel Discussion

In this discussion, the participants are divided into two groups: active participants and passive participants. Active participants are directly involved in the discussion, while passive participants only act as listeners.

4. Symposium Discussion

This discussion is similar to a formal discussion, but one difference is that a symposium discussion is led by a person whose role is to provide input. It is also said that this input person can express their opinion without analyzing the validity of the topic being discussed.

5. Lecture Discussion

This type of discussion is carried out by presenting a problem and discussing it. Only one problem is discussed.

Meanwhile, if we look at the pattern of concentration of discussion participants who play a role in schools, this method consists of two parts, namely:

1. Teacher-Centricity discussion pattern. In this pattern, the teacher plays the following roles:

- a. Indicator: The teacher provides the discussion topic (case/problem)
- b. Director: The teacher directs the discussion
- c. Moderator: The teacher regulates the pace of the participants' conversation

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<sup>11</sup> Irwan *et al.*, "Penerapan Metode Diskusi Dalam Peningkatan Minat Belajar," *IQRO : Journal of Islamic Education* 1, no. 1 (2018): 43–54.

- d. Evaluator: Measures the engagement and progress of participants, both individually and in groups.
2. Student-Centricity discussion pattern. In this pattern, students are participants who play the following roles:
  - a. Act as a good moderator to lead the discussion
  - b. Function as an active party providing input through questions, objections, suggestions, etc.
  - c. Encouragement: Provides motivation and opportunities for fellow participants to actively contribute
  - d. Evaluator: Assesses and draws conclusions from the discussion

### **Application of the discussion method**

The discussion method, when applied in learning activities, has benefits which according to Sagala in Putri Alia are:

1. Encourage children to think critically
2. Encourage children to express their opinions freely
3. Cultivate tolerance for differences of opinion
4. Encourage children to develop their thinking to solve problems together
5. Cultivate children to be active in learning
6. Cultivate democratic attitudes and mutual respect.<sup>12</sup>

Apart from the benefits of the discussion method, the discussion method also has positive and negative sides, namely as follows:

### **Positive side**

The classroom learning atmosphere improves. This is because students' concentration is focused on the lesson or the preaching of God's Word and on discussing a specific issue.

1. Teaching students critical thinking, tolerance, and systematic thinking.
2. Drawing conclusions from the case being discussed so they are easily remembered.
3. Students gain experience in ethical deliberation.

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<sup>12</sup> Putri Aulia *et al.*, "Model Diskusi Kelas Dalam Pengelolaan Kelas Di Sekolah Dasar : Sebuah Kajian Teori," *Jurnal Media Akademik (JMA)* 2, no. 7 (2023): 1–10.

### **Negative side**

There are also negative aspects to the discussion method, as follows:

1. Smart students dominate the discussion, reducing the opportunity for other students to participate.
2. Discussions often become unfocused due to conversations straying from the main topic, leading to a digression.
3. Discussions tend to be time-consuming and inefficient.

The use of the discussion method in the Batu Christian Church Sunday School has shown that students are active when the teacher provides a stimulus for discussion. Researchers observed that students are more interested in discussing a topic. Active students in class often speak more than other students.

### **Word of God**

In Sunday School, the preaching of God's Word (the Bible) is one of the most important aspects of the ministry. In this context, Sunday School children are easily motivated to participate in Sunday School activities, especially during the preaching of God's Word (the Bible). Children need to be taught God's Word. The Bible records that the Lord Jesus Himself forbade His disciples from hindering children from coming to Him (Matthew 19:14).<sup>13</sup> Children are the most beautiful gift God gives to parents. This is a crucial time for children to instill life values based on the truth of God's Word. Children will record more important events that occur around them. The Bible provides numerous statements about how children are important linking generations. A figure named Tri Budiardjo argued that the future of all humanity depends on the "offspring" born of women. This implies that the Bible speaks of children who grow up in the truth of God's Word will become good individuals in the future. The Bible explains that children must receive an adequate education, and this is the responsibility of every parent. Parents have a significant role in educating their children to know the person of the Lord Jesus and to apply Christ's character in their lives.

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<sup>13</sup> Arif Wicaksono, "Signifikansi Pelayanan Anak Sebuah Kajian Eksegesis Markus 10 : 13-16," *Jurnal Apokalupsis* 12, no. 2 (2021): 188–211, <https://doi.org/10.52849/apokalupsis.v12i2.25>.

The Word of God refers to the teachings and instructions given by God to mankind. The Word of God is found in holy books such as the Bible for Christians. In Christianity, the Word of God is considered a perfect and authoritative divine revelation. The Word of God contains wisdom, moral guidance, and spiritual teachings that apply to human life. Christians consider the Word of God to be also considered a source of truth and a guide to life for people who believe in it. The Word of God It is important to understand and respect the Word of God seriously, because it contains teachings that guide us in this life. Through understanding and practicing the Word of God, we can gain wisdom, guidance, and a better life.

### **The role of God's Word for children**

God's Word plays a vital role in a child's life. The Word of God heard is stored in long-term memory. Here are some of its roles:

1. Moral guidance

God's Word provides clear and strict moral guidelines for children. God's Word teaches values such as honesty, love, patience, and forgiveness. By applying God's word, children can grow into responsible and ethical individuals.

2. Character formation

The word of God helps in the formation of children's character. Through stories and lessons in God's Word, children can learn about the qualities that God values, such as humility, perseverance, and hard work, valuing fellow humans and establishing good relationships with others.

3. Spiritual strengthening

The Word of God helps children to develop their relationship with God. God's Word teaches about God's love and grace, and invites children to pray, worship, and live their faith everyday. Through understanding and experience with God's Word, children can know God better and deepen their faith.

4. A source of wisdom and consolation

God's word is also a source of wisdom and comfort for children. In God's Word, children can find words that give comfort when they are facing difficulties or problems. God's Word also provides wisdom and advice that helps children in making good and wise decisions.

It's crucial for parents and teachers to introduce children to God's Word from an early age and help them understand and apply Christian values in their daily lives. This way, children can grow into strong individuals morally, spiritually, and emotionally.

### **Benefits of God's Word for Children**

God's Word has many benefits for children. Here are some examples:

1. Moral Guidance

God's Word teaches important moral values such as honesty, forgiveness, love, and patience. Children can learn how to behave well and responsibly through these teachings. God's Word states that every child is obligated to hold the teachings of His Word in their heart as a guide in their lives. (Proverbs 3:1-2) "My son, do not forget my teaching, but let your heart keep my commandments, for they will add to you length of life and years of life and prosperity."

2. Character Building

God's Word helps shape children's character. Children can learn qualities like humility, courage, and generosity through examples in God's Word. In Paul's letter to the Ephesians 5:2, he says, "Walk in love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God."

3. Comfort and hope

God's Word provides comfort and hope for children when they face difficulties or sadness. God's Word teaches about God's boundless love and His promise to always be with and support His children. In John 14:27, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you; do not be afraid, and do not be afraid."

4. Life Guidance

God's Word provides practical life guidance for children. Children can learn how to live well, make wise decisions, and maintain healthy relationships with God and others. Psalm 1:1 says, "Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers."

Based on the above statement, the researcher stated that, reading the Bible is very beneficial for children in listening to the word of God is a must for Christian children so that their faith can grow properly. In 2 Timothy 3:15-16, it is said that Remember also that from childhood you have

known the Holy Scriptures, which can give you wisdom and lead you to salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All writings inspired by God are indeed beneficial for teaching, for revealing errors, for correcting behavior and for educating people in righteousness.

Sunday school teachers have a duty and responsibility to shape children's spirituality. Hartono stated that Christian educators need to do several important things to shape Christian children, namely introducing God's word from an early age, teaching prayer, practicing worship, and providing examples and practices of love.<sup>14</sup> Deslana R. Hapsarini & Wahyu Suprihati argue that a child's spiritual intelligence is crucial because it helps them establish strong convictions and distinguish between right and wrong. So, that children are able to manage and practice their spiritual values and qualities.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, everyone needs to focus not only on improving their intellectual (IQ) and emotional intelligence, but also on developing their spiritual intelligence.<sup>16</sup> Reading the Bible and listening to stories from God's Word regularly every day plays a vital role in developing spiritual intelligence. This activity doesn't need to be long, but consistency is key. By reading the Bible with children, they will more easily understand the contents of God's Word and begin to recognize and understand the various books of the Bible.

### **Children's Spiritual Intelligence**

In terms of terminology, intelligence is a person's ability to understand a phenomenon critically and analytically and to solve a problem appropriately and effectively, so as to be able to adapt to various environmental situations. J.P. Chaplin defines intelligence in three definitions. First, the ability to adapt quickly and effectively to new situations; Second, the ability to use abstract concepts appropriately, including understanding, arguing, controlling, and criticizing; Third, the ability to understand the relationship between things and learn quickly.<sup>17</sup>

Thus, a person's intelligence can be summarized from three main aspects: the ability to understand concepts, the ability to apply them to problem-solving, and the ability to adapt to

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<sup>14</sup> Handreas Hartono, "Membentuk Karakter Kristen Pada Anak Keluarga Kristen," *KURIOS: Jurnal Teologi Dan Pendidikan Agama Kristen* 2, no. 1 (2014): 62–69, <https://doi.org/10.30995/kur.v2i1.22>.

<sup>15</sup> Assya Syahnaz *et al.*, "Konsep Kecerdasan Spiritual Pada Anak Usia Sekolah Dasar," *RISALAH: Jurnal Pendidikan Dan Studi Islam* 9, no. 2 (2023): 868–79.

<sup>16</sup> Benson Warren S, *Pedoman Lengkap Untuk Pelayanan Kaum Muda* (YKH, 1999), 312.

<sup>17</sup> Marthen Luther Mau *et al.*, "Peranan Membaca Alkitab Terhadap Kecerdasan Spiritual Anak Kristen," *CARAKA: Jurnal Teologi Biblika Dan Praktika* 2, no. 1 (2021): 91–107, <https://doi.org/10.46348/car.v2i1.46>.

various situations. When it comes to intelligence, every parent generally shares the same hope: to raise their child to be intelligent. Intelligent children are considered to be of higher quality, and every mother dreams of having a high-quality child who are able to compete in the current era.<sup>18</sup> Regarding intelligence, many children are considered to lack it, generally referred to as intellectual. This statement discusses the idea that all parents generally want their children to be intelligent in all aspects, especially spiritual ones. According to Wilcox, spiritual intelligence is a belief in a divine power, a way of life characterized by love and trust in God. Spiritual intelligence is a powerful source of motivation and a necessary foundation for the effective functioning of intelligence quotient (IQ) and emotional intelligence (EI). Spiritual intelligence (SQ) is considered the highest human intelligence<sup>19</sup> which is grown from an early age.<sup>20</sup> Spiritual intelligence is crucial in human life because it empowers people to distinguish between good and evil, gives them a sense of morality, and allows them to adapt to new rules. These three factors are interconnected. Spiritually intelligent children will have a positive impact on their friends and family. Discussion methods are used to determine a child's level of intelligence. Spiritual intelligence is expected to enable these children to grow properly through the preaching of God's word.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the discussion above, the researcher concluded that the role of discussion methods in the story of the Word on the activeness of young children in the Sunday school of the Batu Hidup Christian Church has a positive influence on children. When the story of God's Word is delivered by the teacher, it is certainly not easy because of the diversity of characters that exist in children. However, teachers must be patient in applying learning methods, especially by using the discussion method, so that children are active in understanding the story of God's Word delivered by the Sunday school teacher. This way, children can apply the stories in their daily lives.

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<sup>18</sup> Metha Falmalia Arnal and Jaliah, "Sekolah Ramah Anak Era Revolusi Industri Menuju 5.0 Di SMP Muhammadiyah Kota Prabumulih," 2020, 560–73.

<sup>19</sup> Nur Hotimah and Yanto Yanto, "Peran Orang Tua Dalam Meningkatkan Kecerdasan Spiritual Anak Usia Dini," *Indoneisan Journall of Learnig Education and Counseling* 1, no. 2 (2019): 85–93.

<sup>20</sup> Wahyudi Siswanto *et al.*, *Membentuk Kecerdasan Spiritual Anak* (2010), 3, <https://repository.um.ac.id/2988/>.

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