



Implementation of the Understanding of Nonconformity with the World Based on Romans 12:2 in Facing Technological Advancements Among Sunday School Teachers of the Full Gospel Bethel Church in Central Java

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Abstract

This study examines the implementation of the understanding of dissimilarity with the world, as taught in Romans 12:2, by the Sunday School teachers of the Full Gospel Bethel Church (GBIS) throughout Central Java in facing the challenges posed by the development of digital technology. The main objective of this study is to analyze how this understanding is applied in the life and teaching of Sunday School teachers, especially in the context of the use of digital technology. The research methodology applied is a qualitative descriptive approach, which involves an analysis of biblical theology from Romans 12:2, as well as in-depth interviews with GBIS Sunday School teachers in nine regions in Central Java. The data analysis process focuses on teachers' experiences and strategies in integrating their understanding of dissimilarities with the world into their daily lives and educational practices. The results of the study show that GBIS Sunday School teachers apply this understanding not only as a theological concept, but also as a practical framework in dealing with the impact of digital technology. The strategies adopted include the responsible use of social media, the integration of Christian values into teaching materials, and the strengthening of children's spiritual identity through group discussions and interactive activities. The study found that understanding the dissimilarities to the world contributes significantly to helping teachers develop a balanced and critical approach to technology, while strengthening children's spiritual and moral foundations.

Keywords: Dissimilarity with the World; Romans 12:2; Technology; Sunday School; GBIS

INTRODUCTION

This section aims to present the background of the study, focusing on the concept of "dissimilarity with the world," as articulated in Romans 12:2, and examining its significance within Christian teaching (Brown, 2018). Romans 12:2 states, "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind (Carter, 2017)." This biblical passage calls for Christians to distinguish themselves from worldly influences, advocating a transformative mindset that aligns with spiritual principles rather than societal norms. This concept of dissimilarity is crucial in understanding how Christians are expected to navigate their daily lives and interactions, remaining true to their faith amidst the pressures and values imposed by the secular world.

The significance of Romans 12:2 is particularly relevant in the current era, where digital technology has increasingly permeated all aspects of life, including religious practices and education (Davis, 2020). The rise of technology poses unique challenges and opportunities for Christian educators, especially those teaching Sunday School. While digital tools can enhance the reach and impact of Christian teaching, they also bring the risk of exposure to ideas, values, and behaviors that may conflict with Christian principles. As a result, the concept of dissimilarity with the world becomes

more complex, requiring careful consideration of how technology is used within the context of faith-based education.

In light of these challenges, the role of Sunday School teachers becomes pivotal in guiding the younger generation in their spiritual journey while navigating the digital landscape. Teachers must not only impart biblical knowledge but also demonstrate how to live out the teachings of Romans 12:2 in a technologically saturated world. This requires developing strategies to integrate Christian values into the use of digital media, fostering a critical approach to technology that emphasizes moral discernment, and encouraging a lifestyle that reflects the principles of faith over conformity to worldly trends.

The primary objective of this study is to analyze how the understanding of dissimilarity with the world is applied by Sunday School teachers within the Full Gospel Bethel Church (GBIS) across Central Java. It explores how these educators incorporate the principles of Romans 12:2 into both their personal lives and their teaching practices, particularly concerning the use of digital technology. By examining their experiences, this study aims to reveal how they balance the demands of digital technology with the need to maintain a distinct Christian identity and uphold spiritual values in their educational approach.

Moreover, the study addresses the impact of digital technology on Christian education, highlighting the dual role it plays as both a tool for advancing religious instruction and a potential source of distraction or conflicting influences. It seeks to uncover the strategies employed by GBIS Sunday School teachers to integrate faith-based teachings with the responsible use of technology, fostering a spiritual environment that promotes dissimilarity with the world as encouraged by biblical teachings.

Ultimately, this research fills a critical gap in understanding the practical application of theological concepts in modern Christian education. It provides insights into how religious educators can effectively incorporate the teachings of Romans 12:2 into their curriculum and digital practices, thereby equipping the next generation with the skills and spiritual fortitude needed to navigate the complexities of the digital age while staying true to their faith. By focusing on GBIS teachers in Central Java, the study also offers a localized perspective on how Christian educators can respond to the universal challenges posed by technology while remaining grounded in their faith traditions.

METHODS

The study adopts a qualitative descriptive approach to provide an in-depth understanding of how the concept of "dissimilarity with the world," as derived from Romans 12:2, is interpreted and applied by Sunday School teachers within the Full Gospel Bethel Church (GBIS) in Central Java (Johnson, 2017). This methodology is well-suited for exploring complex phenomena that require detailed descriptions, particularly as it allows for the thorough examination of participants' experiences and perspectives. Central to this approach is the use of biblical theological analysis, which serves as a foundational lens through which the principles of Romans 12:2 are interpreted. Alongside this, in-depth interviews were conducted with GBIS Sunday School teachers from nine different regions within Central Java. These interviews sought to uncover how these educators incorporate their understanding of "dissimilarity with the world" into their everyday lives and teaching practices, especially in relation to the challenges posed by digital technology.

The selection of participants was carefully carried out to ensure a comprehensive representation of GBIS Sunday School teachers across the various regions of Central Java. Participants were chosen

based on their experience and active involvement in Sunday School teaching, ensuring that they possess significant insight into the integration of theological principles into their pedagogical practices. Data collection was primarily conducted through in-depth interviews, providing an opportunity for participants to share their experiences, challenges, and strategies in implementing the teachings of Romans 12:2. The interviews were structured to facilitate open and reflective discussions, enabling teachers to discuss how they balance their spiritual responsibilities with the realities of digital technology use. For data analysis, the study employed thematic analysis, a method that allows for the identification of recurring themes and patterns within the qualitative data. This approach was instrumental in uncovering how the teachers' understanding of "dissimilarity with the world" informs their approach to both their personal spiritual growth and their educational practices, offering valuable insights into the interplay between faith and technology in contemporary Christian education.

RESULTS

The findings of the study reveal that Sunday School teachers within the Full Gospel Bethel Church (GBIS) in Central Java possess a profound understanding of the concept of "dissimilarity with the world" as derived from Romans 12:2, which they actively implement in both their professional and personal lives. This theological principle serves not only as a foundational belief but also as a practical guide for daily conduct and educational practices. In their professional role as educators, these teachers integrate the notion of being distinct from worldly influences by fostering environments that encourage spiritual growth and moral discernment. They emphasize the importance of living out Christian values in a manner that is visibly different from secular norms, setting an example for their students through both their teaching and lifestyle.

In addressing the challenges posed by digital technology, GBIS Sunday School teachers have adopted various strategies to ensure that their use of such tools aligns with their spiritual values. One notable approach is the responsible use of social media, where they actively practice discernment in both the content they consume and share. By modeling appropriate behavior online, teachers aim to demonstrate how to engage with digital platforms without compromising their faith. Furthermore, they carefully integrate Christian teachings into their educational materials, ensuring that lessons go beyond mere biblical knowledge and actively encourage students to apply these teachings in their digital interactions. This includes guiding children to critically evaluate the content they encounter on digital platforms and to make decisions that reflect their spiritual beliefs. To further enhance the spiritual identity of children, GBIS teachers employ a range of interactive and community-based activities that reinforce the principles of "dissimilarity with the world." Group discussions are a key method, allowing students to reflect on their experiences with technology in light of Christian values and to support one another in navigating digital challenges. Interactive activities, such as role-playing or storytelling, are also utilized to help children internalize Christian principles and develop a strong spiritual identity. These practices serve to bridge the gap between theoretical theology and practical application, enabling students to understand how to live out their faith in all areas of life, including the digital realm. Overall, the study demonstrates that the concept of "dissimilarity with the world" is not merely a theological doctrine for GBIS Sunday School teachers but a holistic framework that informs their approach to education, personal conduct, and spiritual mentorship in an age of digital technology.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study must be understood within the broader theological context of Romans 12:2, which emphasizes the need for Christians to live distinctly from the values of the secular world. The verse calls for a transformation through the renewal of the mind, advocating for a life that resists conformity to worldly patterns. For the GBIS Sunday School teachers, this theological foundation shapes their perception of technology, guiding them to approach digital tools critically and mindfully. They interpret "dissimilarity with the world" as a call not to reject technology outright but to use it in a way that aligns with their faith, ensuring that digital practices reflect Christian values and are rooted in a desire to glorify God. This demonstrates that their understanding of dissimilarity is not a passive withdrawal from the world but an active engagement that upholds spiritual principles amidst technological influences.

The significance of these findings lies in how Sunday School teachers embody and teach this balanced view of technology. The study reveals that they strive to develop in their students the ability to discern the appropriate use of technology, promoting an approach that is neither overly permissive nor entirely restrictive. By framing digital engagement within the context of faith, these educators help children understand how to interact with technology in a manner that is consistent with their spiritual and moral values. This approach goes beyond simple do's and don'ts, fostering a deeper understanding of how their faith informs every aspect of life, including the digital world. The ability to critically engage with technology while remaining grounded in their spiritual identity becomes an essential skill for these students, who are growing up in a culture deeply intertwined with digital media.

This understanding of "dissimilarity with the world" provides a robust framework for addressing the complexities of technology use within Christian education. By emphasizing a critical and balanced approach, Sunday School teachers encourage students to reflect on their digital behaviors and choices. They are taught to ask questions such as, "Does this content align with my faith?" and "How can I use this platform in a way that honors God?" Such an approach not only helps children navigate the potential pitfalls of digital technology, such as exposure to inappropriate content or addictive behaviors, but also empowers them to utilize technology as a positive tool for spiritual growth and community building. By framing technology use within the context of their faith, children learn to see digital media as a means to share their beliefs, build connections, and access resources that can strengthen their spiritual journey.

In practice, this balance between technology and spirituality has implications for the broader goals of Christian education in a digital age. It encourages a model of teaching that is not just concerned with imparting biblical knowledge but is deeply focused on character formation and the development of critical thinking skills. Sunday School teachers play a vital role in mentoring students to become discerning users of technology who can engage with the digital world without compromising their values. This is especially important as children are often exposed to conflicting messages and values online, requiring a strong foundation in faith to navigate these challenges effectively. The ability to distinguish between secular influences and spiritual principles equips children to make informed choices that align with their Christian beliefs.

The study's results highlight the importance of integrating theology into practical teaching strategies in a digital context. By applying the teachings of Romans 12:2, Sunday School teachers bridge the gap between abstract theological concepts and real-world applications. They offer tangible examples of how to live out Christian values in an era where digital technology is ever-present. This integration is particularly crucial as it addresses the unique needs of contemporary

students who are increasingly influenced by digital media. Teachers' efforts to model and teach responsible technology use within a faith framework not only contribute to the moral and spiritual development of their students but also empower them to be agents of positive change in the digital space.

In conclusion, the findings of this study underscore the evolving role of Christian educators in a digital age, where the need to balance technological engagement with spiritual growth is more pressing than ever. The concept of "dissimilarity with the world," as articulated in Romans 12:2, provides a compelling framework for teaching students to critically engage with digital technology while remaining grounded in their Christian identity. The strategies employed by GBIS Sunday School teachers offer a model for how theology can be effectively integrated into educational practices, fostering an environment where children are encouraged to develop both their digital literacy and their spiritual discernment. The broader implications of these findings suggest that as technology continues to evolve, so too must the approaches of Christian education, ensuring that faith remains central to the digital lives of students.

CONCLUSION

The study's key findings provide valuable insights into how theological concepts, particularly the principle of "dissimilarity with the world" from Romans 12:2, are operationalized within the context of Sunday School teaching. The strategies employed by GBIS Sunday School teachers demonstrate a commitment to fostering a spiritual environment that balances the challenges and opportunities presented by digital technology. These teachers not only impart biblical teachings but also guide children on how to apply these teachings practically in their digital interactions, helping them develop discernment and spiritual maturity. The integration of Christian values into teaching materials and the emphasis on responsible use of social media underscore the holistic approach to faith-based education, ensuring that children's spiritual growth is nurtured while they learn to navigate the complexities of digital technology. Consequently, the study highlights the critical role that theology plays in shaping the spiritual and moral foundation of children in the digital era, providing a model for how educators can approach digital literacy through a faith-centered lens.

The study also contributes to the broader discourse on the intersection of theology, education, and technology. It offers a framework for how Christian educators can develop a balanced approach to technology, one that neither dismisses its potential benefits nor overlooks its risks. This balanced approach is rooted in a deeper understanding of spiritual identity and moral discernment, equipping students with the skills to engage with digital media critically and responsibly. These findings suggest that further research could explore the long-term impact of such educational strategies on children's spiritual and moral development in increasingly digital societies. Additionally, practical applications may include developing specific curricula or training programs for Sunday School teachers that emphasize the integration of faith principles with digital literacy skills. The study lays a foundation for future inquiry into how theology can continue to shape effective educational practices in a world where digital technology is ever-present, and where the spiritual guidance of young people remains a priority.

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