

# The Effectiveness of Evangelism by the Wordless Book Method for Children Aged 5-12 Years at Rumah Belajar Mega

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## Abstract

An interesting period of human development to study is childhood, especially middle childhood or school age. The development of children at this school age is physically slow growth but the cognitive development of children begins to develop well. Also, the influence of peers will greatly affect their development. Therefore, it is necessary to start teaching about evangelism so that there is a balance between the spiritual and psychological development of children. This research was conducted on several children at Rumah Belajar Mega in West Bandung Regency. The demographics of the population in this area are predominantly Sundanese and Muslim. The researcher will see the effectiveness of the application of teaching evangelism to children using the wordless book method in the age range of 5-12 years. This research is descriptive qualitative. The research sample was 30 children who were students of Rumah Belajar Mega. The results of the research were obtained from direct observation and interviews with research subjects, and well documented through photos and videos. Children's understanding of the Bible improved well, besides that there were also good character changes.

**Keywords:** Child development, children aged 5-12 years, evangelism.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Each individual goes through different stages of development in their life, and one of these stages is childhood. The definition and understanding of children vary across different disciplines and fields of study. In the discipline of biology, children are living things that have not yet reached the mature stage. Legally speaking, the Indonesian government has ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child through the issuance of the Decree of the President of the Republic of Indonesia Number 36 of 1990, stating as follows: "For this convention, a child means a human being under 18 years of age, unless if according to the law that applies to the child it is determined that the age of adulthood is reached earlier" (KemenPPA, 3). In the ILO convention no 182 of 1999 concerning the worst forms of child labor, the definition of a child is stated in article 2 which reads: "Children are all persons under the age of 18" (KemenPPA, 4).

In Law No. 39 of 1999 concerning Human Rights, the definition of a child is included in Article 1 paragraph 1 which reads thus: "A child is every human being under

18 years of age and unmarried, including children who are still in the womb if this is in their interests” (KemenPPA, 4), whereas according to the Law, (Law Number 23 of 2002 and Law Number 35 of 2014) a child is someone who is under 18 years old, including children who are still in the womb (Lestari et al, 24).

In the realm of child development, the classification of children is not limited solely to age, but also encompasses their physical and emotional intelligence levels, as well as their other skills and abilities. In *Perkembangan Anak Jilid 1*, Hurlock stated that there are five main developmental periods in childhood with an estimated age of each development. The first period is prenatal. It is the period from conception to birth. The second is the neonatal period, which is the period from newborn to 14 days old. The third period is infancy, which is the period from 2 weeks to 2 years of age. The fourth period is childhood. It is divided into two parts. The period of 2-6 years is called early childhood, and the period of 6-13 years is called late childhood. The last period of child development is puberty, which is the age period of 11-16 years (Hurlock, 38).

Meanwhile, Papalia et al said that there are five stages of child development. The first stage is called prenatal, which is from conception to birth. The second stage is infancy and toddler, which is from birth to 3 years. The third is early childhood, from 3 to 6 years. The fourth is the middle childhood stage, from the ages of 6 to 12 years. The last stage is the adolescent stage, namely the ages of 12 to 20 years (Papalia et al, 5).

Based on *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia (KBBI)*, the definition of children has several different meanings, namely: second offspring, small humans, small animals, small trees that grow in large clumps of trees, people who come from certain places small, so that in KBBI there is a disambiguation in the meaning of children. From the understanding of the child above, it can be concluded that a child is someone under the age of 18, including those in the womb, and has certain unique development patterns during his life period from the time he was in the womb to the age of 18.

This research focuses on the childhood period, especially the school age, which the developmental period is between 6 and 12 years. The child’s development is physically slow, but cognitively, reasoning, logic, and language increase rapidly. The child’s life is much influenced by the environment and peers. It can be a positive or negative thing.

Jesus Christ himself loved children very much. He used children as an example of trust and a simple relationship with God. He encourages children to come to Him and bless children (Matthew 19:13-15) and there are many verses that state children or parallel children. Many of the believers stated that the introduction of Christ began when they were small, and even many leaders were changed because of good childhood memories. The mission’s interest in children reached its peak when there was a world mission meeting in 2009, twenty years after the Convention on the Rights of the Child took place, namely the *9/14 window global conference* which discussed a lot about children’s missions, this followed up by the number of children’s mission conferences in various countries. The need for children’s services and the development of children’s theology is something that is felt very urgent at this time by various parties involved in the world of children’s services.

Realizing this, Rumah Belajar Mega began to carry out evangelism services to children with an educational platform in a structured but dynamic way. It taught children that they also have the right to proclaim the Gospel to their friends, even to their elders.

One of the teaching methods is to use the wordless book method by using color symbols as news media. The service is carried out in an area where the Sundanese are dominant in a village in West Bandung Regency, where the composition of the Islamic religion reaches 96-99 percent in each sub-district in West Bandung Regency.

This article was created to invite everyone back to evangelism by any method, to anyone. Evangelism comes from the basic word Gospel from the Greek word “*Euaggelion*” which means “*good news*”. In King James Version, this word is translated as “*Gospel*”, while in the Indonesian Bible, it is translated as “*Kabar baik*.”. The Wordless Book method is one of the various methods of evangelism. This research shows that the method used is still effective, accompanied by studying child development patterns and children’s learning styles. The effectiveness of this method is even better. The impact of teaching evangelism to children does not only have an impact on knowing Christ but also has a direct impact on the child’s character and academics.

## II. METHODOLOGY

This research is descriptive. Sampling or informants and data sources were used using a purposive approach, namely by collecting samples and data sources with certain considerations. Data collection techniques were also carried out through field observations, documentation analysis, and interview techniques. Interviews were conducted with children and parents.

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1 Development of Children Aged 6-12 Years

The developmental stage of a child at this age is commonly known as the school age or group age, and is often considered a vulnerable period. Papalia et al state that during this stage, the child’s physical growth may be slow while their strength and athletic abilities improve. They also experience a decrease in egocentrism and begin to think logically, although primarily in a concrete manner. Memory and language skills improve, enabling them to benefit from formal education. The development of self-concept affects their self-esteem, and peers become increasingly important. (Papalia et al, 5).

One of the objectives of the development task is to remind parents and teachers to prepare children for these new expectations. When children have played with their peers, it awakens parents to teach new things in their environment, so that when they play with their peers they are ready to do what their teachers or parents teach them (*Perkembangan Anak*, Hurlock, 40).

During the school-age period, children have a remarkable ability to quickly absorb knowledge from their peers and surrounding communities. This makes it an opportune time to teach them various subjects, including the Bible. With proper guidance and effective teaching methods, preaching the gospel can have a significant impact on their future development.

In *Perkembangan Anak Jilid 2* Harlock observed that a child’s interest in religion declined towards the end of childhood or after age 12. He explained that through the education of children, interest in religion is encouraged. Children who grow up with the habit of praying before eating, praying before going to bed, and listening to Bible stories show a greater religious interest in their development than children who attend Sunday School only once a week. A child’s interest development depends on what is being

taught. Children will be more interested in learning about heaven and God when they are taught that rain and sun are from God and God is in heaven. Conversely, if children are constantly taught that if they rebel and sin they will go to hell, it is natural that they will think more about hell and sin. To help children understand religion, religious concepts are taught in everyday language and illustrations are created that tie them to specific symbols from the Bible to make the concepts concrete and real. Towards the end of childhood, a child's religious involvement diminishes. This is strongly influenced by their growth and by their peer community and environment (Hurlock, 130). Children benefit in many ways from being involved with peers. They develop the skills necessary for socialization and intimacy, improve relationships, and develop a sense of belonging. On the contrary, the adverse effects threaten the development of the child. To become part of a peer group, a child must accept the values and norms of his behavior. Undesirably, the child may not have the strength to fight back (Papalia et al., 313).

When children do not conform to their peers, it can lead to both internal rejection and rebellion (Thompson, 6). It is like a pendulum. When you shake it and release it, the pendulum swings left and right. Similar to the psychology of children, if you experience rejection, they will become rebellious. This requires an authority figure for the child, such as a parent, teacher, or someone the child looks up to.

Many people experience a fundamental shift in mindset, especially during a crisis (Covey, 38). Therefore, even at school age, children often face crises that adults are unaware of, like changes in the meaning of friendships, acceptance of peers, beginning to absorb information in large quantities and analyze something, and sometimes facing the demands of parents, teachers, or seniors. It is an important part that school-age children face. Again, the role of authority figures is very important in this academic development.

### **3.2 Children's Learning Processes and Styles**

Learning styles are generally divided into three parts, namely Visual, Auditory, and Kinesthetic. Visual has the modality of accessing visual images, which are created or remembered either in the form of colors, spatial relations, or images. Children with this style tend to pay attention to everything, prefer to read rather than read, remember pictures, and need an overall picture and purpose in capturing teaching details. Auditory has the modality of accessing all sounds and words, music, tone, voice intonation, and dialogue are more prominent. Common characteristics of auditory children are that they are highly influenced by sound, are more likely to lose concentration in the presence of certain frequencies, prefer dialogue, and prefer to be read aloud rather than to read on their own. Kinesthetic has the modality to access all types of movement and emotion. Children with this learning style tend to easily grasp movement coordination, good emotional responses, and more prominent physical comfort. The common characteristics of children with a kinesthetic learning style are moving a lot, touching other people and being close together, showing writing or moving their lips while reading, remembering while walking, and looking (DePotter et al, 123-124).

Everyone has these three basic learning styles, but usually, there is one that stands out, the teacher's ability to analyze children's learning styles and orchestrate this is a challenge. The use of colors, pictures, imagination, good intonation of voice, asking several children to demonstrate related material, and learning while listening to classical music is one way of orchestrating children, and of course with their respective portions. The teacher's ability to design these situations will maximize the child's potential in absorbing the teaching given.

According to Tong, in the learning process, several aspects must be considered so that the truth can be conveyed correctly, including the five senses, psychological feelings, imagination, discovery of opposite facts (comparative learning), aspects of praxis (practicing), and imitating (Tong, 54).

Another thing in the process of teaching children is the need to build a child's self-image. According to Haystead, in general, humans accept other people for what they see, adults are able and can, but children do n the most easily do this, children's feelings can usually be seen immediately from the child's expression. The child's self-concept is a reflection of what has been reflected through the attitudes and behavior of other people towards him (Haystead, 35), so the role of teachers and parents is very important, especially when teaching God's Word, children not only learn from what we teach but also what we do, including in the teaching process.

### 3.3 Gospel Teaching to Children

The term evangelism is a well-known concept in Christian spirituality, with every Christian being responsible for carrying out this task. Despite being a well-established practice, evangelism still remains relevant and is promoted by believers who are knowledgeable about it. Therefore, evangelism is considered to be an ongoing and essential component that must be continuously practiced.

Love states that the kingdom of God provides us with a comprehensive framework for mission (Love, 40). According to Cunningham, seven parts of sociopathy are like a classroom for disciplining nations (Cunningham, 47) and education is one of those parts. Including teaching children. Hesselgrave stated that the main mission of the Church and, therefore, churches are to proclaim the Gospel of Christ and gather believers into local churches that are built up in their faith and become effective in their ministry will plant new congregations throughout the world (Hesselgrave, 19). However, today the church is experiencing forgotten syndrome, that is, forgetting the great commission and being busy pursuing other things (Gereja Kristen Kalam Kudus Bandung, 19). Total evangelism, both within one's own culture and between cultures, must be the goal of the Church before the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ (Brougham, 29). This statement seems ambitious, but the truth cannot be denied that evangelism must be carried out as a whole, including evangelism through children.

God showed His deep concern for children by providing many instructions about teaching them in the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 4:9, 10; 6:5-7; 11:18, 19; Psalm 34:11; 78:1- 8; Proverbs 22:6; Joel 1:3). There are examples in the Old Testament of God working in the lives of children, such as Moses (Exodus 2), Samuel (1 Samuel 3), the little girl in Naaman's house (2 Kings 5), the son of a widow (1 King 3). kings 17), son of the maiden Sunem (2 Kings 4), and Josiah (2 Kings 22). One of the reasons for the establishment of the Passover and the Atonement of the firstborn, (as well as the placement of 2 stone memorials in the Jordan) was to allow parents to teach their children (Exodus 12:26; 13:14; Joshua 4:6). The Lord Jesus showed this deep love and concern for boys and girls. He welcomed them (Mark 10:13); He embraced them (Mark 10:16); He accepted their praise (Matthew 21:15, 16). He attended to their physical needs, healed the noble's son (John 4:46-54), raised Jairus' daughter from the dead (Mark 5:38-43), and then instructed that she be fed. He does not want them to be offended (Matthew 18:6), rejected (Matthew 18:5), or insulted (Matthew 18:10). He invited them to come to Him (Mark 10:14). He wanted them to be saved (Matthew 18:11). He

expressed the will of the Father emphatically, “Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish” (Matthew 18:14, NKJV) (Haaiker, 10).

Lawrence O Richards stated that very often Bible teaching is taught to children blindly only at the level of mere information knowledge. The statement conveyed that the Bible is God's statement regarding the reality that must be conveyed to all individuals, children are also unique individuals, do not assume that children will not understand, as human beings, children can respond in faith and can experience that reality, even though sometimes reality is beyond the reach of children. With a reality that can be felt by children, the Bible can be taught to children properly (Richards, 90).

The pattern of teaching the Bible to children still has to refer to what Jesus did, Jesus never discriminated against other people, or everything he served, including children. Jesus' disciples also experienced education, in this educational period, this is the secret key to the future for them to become extraordinary preachers of the Gospel (Sawadogo, 25). Many methods can be used in evangelizing children, one of which is the wordless book method. The Wordless Book method is a method that has been applied for a long time but is still effectively used today. This method was introduced by a preacher named Charles Spurgeon to illustrate the catechism of the Christian faith by using color symbols in front of hundreds of orphans on January 11, 1886, initially, he used 3 main colors namely Black (illustration of sin), Red (Blood of Christ/redemption) and White (Truth). This method is suitable for children and also for cross-cultural missions as an early introduction to the basic content of the Bible itself.

### 3.4 Regional Demographics

Based on data from BPS (*Badan Pusat Statistik*) West Bandung Regency and village data, Kertamulya village area is 2.48 km<sup>2</sup>, with a density of 10,639 people/km<sup>2</sup>, is the village with the highest population density in the Padalarang sub-district. Kertamulya Village has 25 RWs and 119 RTs.

The following is the distribution of population data based on population, and percentage of religion by sub-district.

**Table 1.** Distribution by religion

	KBB	PDL
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Total population		1,814,226	183,700
Percentage of Religion	Islam	98.39	96,84
	Christian	1.16	2,27
	Catholic	0.37	0.75
	Hindu	0.02	0.02
	Buddha	0.03	0.11
	Other	0.02	0

Point: KBB = West Bandung Regency

PDL = Padalarang District

The percentage distribution based on religion is almost evenly distributed in all districts, which ranges from 96-99% Muslim.

For distribution based on ethnicity, there is no data from BPS data, but when referring to empirical data, the indigenous people, namely the Sundanese, are the largest ethnic group. Apart from that, other immigrant tribes that can be said to be numerous are Javanese, Padang, and Batak, while relatively few other tribes are found.

The population of Kertamulya Village itself is 26,385 people, while the percentage of the population aged 5-18 years is 23.11% or around 6099 people. The rate of religious distribution in Kertamulya village is also almost the same as the sub-district data. Christianity in the dominant data was brought by immigrant tribes, namely the Batak tribe.

Based on data from Indonesia Pelangi Nusantara, in the best ethnic profile, the Sundanese are the largest unreached tribe. There is about thirty-five million Sundanese population and the number of believers is only twenty-one thousand (Indonesia Pelangi Nusantara, 75).

### 3.5 Overview of the Rumah Belajar Mega

Rumah Belajar Mega is a children's service organization engaged in non-formal education, currently, the program includes: Calistung, Mapel Les, English Club, and Jumat Ceria (Children's Worship), founded by 3 siblings, currently 48 students are cared for, every child has the right to take part in the program offered, dominantly children take part in 2 programs.

**Table 2:** Number of students at Mega Learning House

Program	Number of children
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Calistung		6 Children
COURSE	Grade 2	6 Children
	Grade 3	5 Children
	Grade 4	5 Children
	Grade 6	3 children
	Grade 7	1 Child
English Club		21 Children
Jumat Ceria		34 Children

source from Rumah Belajar Mega

Routine activities are carried out from Monday to Friday. Calistung is held Monday-Wednesday, Les Mapel every Monday and Wednesday, English Club every Tuesday and Thursday, and Jumat Ceria every Friday, with a duration of 1-1.5 hours per session.

### 3.6 The Effectiveness of the Wordless Book Method

A Bible lesson using the wordless book is held on Fridays for a total of 30 students ages 5-12. These 30 children receive the same method in proportion. The teaching that is carried out also considers other aspects. The child's learning style will be a consideration in teaching. Unifying visual, audio, and kinesthetic styles are used by providing attractive colors, good voice intonation according to the material, and body language that is not too excessive and not passive and asking several children to help re-presentism. This bookless method is carried out using storytelling techniques accompanied by showing colors and giving illustrations of these colors.

A Magnesen's research, students' comprehension abilities differ at each stage depending on what stimuli they can get. The research states that students learn 10 percent from what is read, 20 percent from what is heard, 30 percent from what is seen, 50 percent from what is seen and heard, 70 percent from what is said, 90 percent from what is said and done. These things are also done by teachers at Rumah Belajar Mega.

The meeting to teach the wordless method was planned for two meetings. The first meeting was attended by 30 children. The first stage of teaching the Wordless Book Method begins by showing the colors that are sequential and not random, namely gold, black, red, white, and green. Children are asked to repeat and all children can do it. In this first stage the researchers saw that there were no significant problems, all children with different learning styles could follow them well. Furthermore, the teacher began to give the meaning of the color representing a symbol in the preaching of the Gospel sequentially as well. Gold is a symbol of God's kingdom and the beginning of all things was created, which is beautiful like gold. The supporting verses are Revelation 21:18-21 and Genesis 1:1-28. Black is a picture of sin, namely when Adam and Eve fell into sin. The supporting verses are Genesis 3:1-24, Rom 6:23, and Romans 3:23. Red represents the blood of Christ, namely the atonement on the cross. The supporting verses are Romans 3:25, Isaiah 53:1-7, John 3:16, and Ephesians 2:8. White depicts purity or cleanness. This shows that sin has been redeemed by Christ's sacrifice on the cross. The supporting verses are John 14:6, Romans 10:9-10, and John 10:27-28. Green is a picture of growth, like a tree. It is hoped that children will continue to grow in knowing God until



they are finally called home by Heavenly Father. The supporting verses are 1 Thessalonians 5:14-22, James 2:17, and John 14:12.

In the second stage, the children were asked to repeat the color sequence, after which they ordered the colors and symbols of each color without mentioning the supporting verses. At this stage, all children could name and sort them properly. Furthermore, the teacher offered the children to explain in front of their friends. The children were enthusiastic and took turns explaining in front of their friends, and the five children did well. The teacher then took a random color and asked the child to answer the symbol for that color. Six out of 30 children had difficulty following. This was repeated three times and the overall result was able to recall. In the first stage, the emphasis was on colors and symbols, not on supporting verses.

Children understood the gospel message, namely how God created the heavens and earth perfectly, but humans fell into sin and were separated from God, expelled from the Garden of Eden. Humans did everything they could to return to God. Only the blood of Christ can redeem all sins and transgressions. Redemption can be obtained by believing and accepting Christ as Lord and Savior. By redemption, humans are purified, but humans cannot live as they please. It is hoped that redeemed humans will grow and bear fruit. This statement is an emphasis conveyed to every child. Next is to challenge the children by asking: "Do you want to share this good news, so other friends can feel God's love?" A tree with the fruits of true character, the work of another teacher as an affirmation for everyone who sees it, pasted on the classroom wall, committing, one week ahead what to do. After that, praying together so that God's love will be manifested upon their friends. Overall, it lasts about 75 minutes, with 30 minutes teaching The Wordless Book. A tree that bears the fruit of true character, another teacher's work taped to the wall of the classroom, as a confirmation to all who see it, you have to do what needs to be done a week in advance Then they pray together that God's love will be revealed to their friends, their friends. In total it takes about 75 minutes, 30 minutes teaching the silent book.

At the second meeting, some children were absent. The children were asked to say the previous week's lesson without showing their colors. As a result, 70% of children remembered it and said it well in turn. Next, the teacher picked one of the colors and asked them to name the meaning of that color. By saying it together, the children would remember it again. This was done repeatedly to stimulate the child's memory and try to enter the word of God into the subconscious mind. The teacher again emphasized the order of colors. This is an attempt to keep God's work intact from beginning to end.

At this meeting, there was a focus on several parts of the supporting verses. The target of this verse is for the age of 10-12 years with the cognitive considerations that they are already able to analyze in a simple way between supporting verses and the colors provided. The age under 10 years is still emphasized with the symbol of color and the sequence of God's work. Teaching in phase two is focused on training children to tell stories to each other so that all children have the opportunity to listen and speak. The results of this meeting were that 90 percent of the children who attended the meeting could tell and understand the meaning of this sequence. In the following weeks, they were no longer taught specifically but did it at the beginning and the end of class, for 5 minutes.

An indicator of a child's understanding of this method is that children can understand God's work starting from creation, the fall of mankind, the work of Jesus on

the cross as redemption, and how to live as God's children now. They understand and realize how God loves children. Moreover, they apply it by diligently praying, studying, respecting teachers and parents, as well as doing other real actions in their daily life.

The results of observations compared before and after being at the Rumah Belajar Mega in a few months are that there were quite good changes in terms of character and high willingness to learn Words. This observation was carried out by self-observation and interviews with the parents of the children. This change in the character of students also indicates that a healthy community of students at this school-age stage of child development will produce very superior individuals. Interviews with the parents of the students also provided an encouraging report in which parents admitted that their children were getting better, and were always enthusiastic about having Jumat Ceria. Other reports say there is an increase in children's academic scores at school. Some children can tell stories to their friends at school and in their home environment, even though the majority of their friends are Muslim. All these indications again imply that the Bible has the power to change everyone including children.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Every human being has a period of life. The period of child development is unique, especially the period during school-age children, or ages 6 to 12 years. At this age children's physical development is slow, but cognitive development, reasoning, language, logic, and analysis increase very quickly. Developments at this time are also heavily influenced by peers or their daily environment, where children will imagine what they see and feel directly from their environment, for this a positive and true community is needed, especially at this age, interest in religion is high and will experience decline in late childhood. At this age, good momentum in teaching evangelism for children can be well absorbed and firmly embedded in their next life with the right method and delivery, according to children's development. One method of evangelism is the wordless book method.

Rumah Belajar Mega as a non-profit organization is here to be part of this movement, an institution that serves non-formal education for children. In the practice of teaching, it proves that the application of evangelism to children is going well, children understand their identity before God, and how God loves them and they want to share that story with others. The effectiveness of this method is felt to be very effective when applied to students aged 5-12 years. Indications apart from their understanding of the Bible can also be seen from the change in their character which is much better and there is also an increase academically.

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