

NECESSITY AND ROLES OF CONVERSION FOR CHRISTIAN EDUCATORS

Abigail Daniel Dariya^{1*}

^{1*}Baptist Theological Seminary, Kaduna.

* **Correspondence:** Abigail Daniel Dariya

*The authors declare
that no funding was
received for this work.*



Received: 26-January-2025

Accepted: 27-February-2026

Published: 04-March-2026

Copyright © 2026, Authors retain copyright. Licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited. <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/> (CC BY 4.0 deed)

This article is published in the **MSI Journal of Multidisciplinary Research (MSIJMR)** ISSN 3049-0669 (Online)

The journal is managed and published by MSI Publishers.

Volume: 3, Issue: 3 (March-2026)

ABSTRACT: This paper examines the indispensability of genuine conversion experience for Christian educators and its decisive influence on their teaching ministry. It argues that conversion is sacrosanct to the vocation of the Christian teacher because life and teaching are inseparably intertwined. In response to contemporary aberrations in church teaching, where some educators minister without personal conversion, the study validates the necessity of authentic faith commitment for two primary reasons: first, that educators teach out of lived spiritual experience rather than abstract theory; and second, that they effectively guide learners toward a conscious decision of faith. A Christian educator who lacks personal conversion risks presenting doctrinal theory without transformative reality. The paper further contends that Christian education is distinguished from other forms of teaching by its supernatural, God-centered orientation and redemptive purpose. The ultimate task of the Christian teacher is to present Christ as Savior so that learners may believe, accept, and experience spiritual transformation, passing from death to life and manifesting the character of Christ in daily living. Rooted in the authority of Scripture as the inspired and inerrant Word of God, Christian teaching seeks not merely cognitive

development but spiritual regeneration and ethical formation. Thus, conversion is both the foundation of the educator's identity and the catalyst for authentic, transformative pedagogy.

Keywords: *Necessity, Conversion and Christian Educators.*

Introduction

This paper explores the necessity of conversion for Christian educators and examines its role in their teaching lives. The matter of conversion to a Christian educator is sacrosanct to their function. Their work and life are interconnected. There are many aberrant practices in the teaching ministry of the church today, whereby Christian educators teach without having a personal conversion experience. The task of this paper is to validate the necessity of conversion experience for Christian educators, basically for two reasons: for the educator to teach out of personal experience, for the educator to lead the learner to the point of deciding before or after teaching/and for the educator not to teach theory of what they have no experience. The task of a Christian teacher is to present Christ as Savior so that those taught may believe, accept (convert), and pass from death to life, which reproduces the spirit of Christ in everyday life.

Conversion to Christianity is a transformative experience that goes beyond mere religious affiliation. For Christian educators, this personal commitment to faith is not only essential but fundamentally shapes their teaching philosophy, ethical framework, and interactions with students. This is so in many ways; Christian teaching is no different from any other kind of teaching. The crucial difference lies in the added supernatural dimension. It is God-centered in that it teaches that salvation meets man's need. The Bible is the leading textbook in Christian teaching. It is the inerrant, inspired word of the eternal given to man to reveal his plan, destiny, and will.

Overview of Christian Education

There are many scholarly definitions about Christian Education today, however, the writer will like to agree with Pazmino, (1997. 35) gave a definition of Christian

Education as "the deliberate, systematic, and sustained divine and human effort to share or appropriate the knowledge, values, attitudes, skills, sensitivities, and behaviours that comprise or are consistent with the Christian faith". He went on to say that it fosters the change, renewal, and reformation of persons, groups and structures by the power of the Holy Spirit to conform to the revealed will of God as expressed in the scriptures and preeminently in the person of Jesus Christ, as well as any outcomes of that effort. Christian education business or purpose is essential to its existence. Wilhoit (1986, 11) and Anthony (2001, 133) both agreed that Christian education is dedicated to helping people discover God's meaning for life and to bring people to the saving faith in Jesus Christ. It aims at enabling them to gain a liberating perspective and lifestyle. People are likely to lose their faith in Christ if they are not taught and empowered to be innovative, thereby transforming teaching and learning processes.

The sole purpose of Christian Education, as cited by Anthony (2001, 133).is "to bring people to a saving faith in Jesus Christ, to train them in a life of discipleship and equip them for Christian service in the world today. Also, to develop in them a biblical worldview that will assist them in making significant decisions from a Christian perspective, the task is to mould learners' character for successful living and acceptability before God in worship. It is designed to be incorporated into the school subject alongside the school's teaching. It is also carried out at home, as the home is the first school curriculum.

The primary context or setting for Christian Education is the church through the educational ministry. It can also take place outside the walls of the church through Christian schools, bible studies, camps and parachurch institutions. Christian Education is not limited to just one kind of organization or ministry and is found outside the church in many different venues, Anthony (2001, 133), Ajao (2016, 382). In this sense, Christian education is a lifelong process that caters to all people from birth to old age and is shaped by and guided by the Christian gospel. It involves the efforts of the Christian community to guide both young and adult persons toward an ever-richer participation in the Christian fellowship. It is both individual and social in nature.

In Ishola's (2019) words, Jesus subsequently gave His disciples a teaching commission (Matt. 28:19, 20). The obedience of the Apostles to this commission to teach is clearly shown in Acts 5:42, where the group met daily in the Temple and in houses to teach and preach Jesus Christ. As a result, the number of disciples significantly increased. Among the early Christians, the teaching ministry, as in the case of Jesus, predominated over the preaching ministry. Wherever preaching is at its best, the sermons, as did those of Peter, Stephen, and Paul, contain a significant element of teaching content. He went on to say that Paul was an outstanding teacher of his day. His earlier training in his profession was beneficial when he became a Christian, as he put it to good use in expanding God's kingdom. His missionary journeys were more of teaching missions than jumping from one city to another, preaching crusades. He gathered small groups to teach at homes. He emphasized giving these people instructions to help them grow in the faith. Many of these groups turned to house churches in Rome, Corinth, and Ephesus, among other cities.

Understanding Christian Conversion: Biblical Context

The subject under consideration has sparked several discussions across different fora; it is central to their focus. Having a good grasp of it will help the Christian educator function without guilt. It is important to note that conversion cannot be achieved by human effort. It is a result of the grace of God, which is freely given to all who believe in Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:8). In Klein's (2023) words, Christian conversion is a transformation that takes place in a person's life when they turn from sin and place their faith in Jesus Christ. The Bible teaches that conversion involves a change of heart, mind, and behavior, and it is a work of God's grace.

According to Wayne (2015, 702), conversion is a word that means "turning," a spiritual turn, a turn from sin to Christ. The turning is called repentance, and the turning to Christ is called faith; until that is done, the process is not yet completed. Christian conversion cannot be achieved by human effort alone. It is a result of the grace of God, which is freely given to all who believe in Jesus Christ. Wells (1989, 21) God initiates the process of conversion by drawing man to Himself, revealing His truth to us, and opening our hearts to believe. It is only through the work of the

Holy Spirit that we can come to faith in Christ. This writer stands with Wells that conversion is absolutely the prerogative of God; He begins and completes it.

The Christian faith emphasizes personal conversion as a cornerstone of spiritual life, not works of personal effort. The Bible presents conversion as a turning point marked by repentance and acceptance of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior (Acts 3:19, Romans 10:9-10). For Christian educators, this transformation aligns with the core mission of Christian education: to nurture learners in the knowledge and love of God. Conversion inspires educators with a sense of purpose and direction, grounding their teaching in a personal relationship with Christ and a commitment to biblical principles. Again, Wayne (2015, 705) asserts that conversion is a foundational concept, grounded in Christian theology and integral to understanding salvation, discipleship, and the mission of the church.

The concept of conversion is deeply rooted in Scripture, which describes it as a transformative process involving repentance, faith, and a new birth. 2 Corinthians 5:17 (NIV). *"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here"*. Conversion is depicted as a spiritual rebirth, a radical transformation that makes an individual a new creation in Christ. This new birth is not merely a change in behavior but a profound renewal of the heart and mind, bringing in the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Acts 2:38 (NIV) *Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."* Romans 8:9 (NIV) *"You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you."* The Holy Spirit plays a crucial role in conversion, indwelling believers and empowering them to live out their new identity in Christ. This indwelling signifies a personal relationship with God and an ongoing process of sanctification.

In conversion, repentance and faith are both essential components, according to Wayne (2015, 703). Repentance involves turning away from sin and towards God, recognizing that sin separates man from Him and that only through His grace and forgiveness can we be reconciled to Him. Faith involves trusting in God and accepting His gift of salvation through Jesus Christ. He went on to say that the call to

repentance and faith is a common theme throughout the Bible. John the Baptist called people to "*repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near*" (Matthew 3:2), and Jesus Himself preached the same message (Mark 1:15). The apostle Paul also emphasized the importance of repentance and faith in his preaching and writing.

Repentance and faith are not just one-time events, but ongoing attitudes and actions that mark the Christian life. Cited by Gillespie (1993), man is called to turn away from sin and towards God continually, and to continue trusting in Him and His promises. This process of sanctification is the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. The Bible teaches that humans are powerless to save themselves from sin and death. It is only through faith in Jesus Christ, who died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins, that we can be saved. Wells (1989, 34) said that the New Testament is filled with examples of individuals who experienced conversion, including the Apostle Paul, who went from persecutor of Christians to a faithful follower of Christ. The book of Acts provides many accounts of conversion experiences, including that of the Ethiopian eunuch and the Philippian jailer. The Requirements for Christian conversion, according to the Bible, are repentance and faith.

Repentance involves acknowledging and turning away from sin, while faith is trusting in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. This is what makes Christianity different from other religions, man's religion of the world, that you are not the one who makes the significant differences; it is God. Again, when an individual repents, the Bible also teaches that those who have genuinely experienced Christian conversion will have assurance of salvation. This assurance is based on the promises of God's Word and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the believer's life (Best, 1985, 67).

Some Misconceptions in Christian Conversion.

Best (1985, 34), Wayne (2015, 708), and Klein (2023) all agreed on the misconceptions about Christian conversion. Below are the misconceptions in Christian conversion. It is the duty of the Christian educator to deal with these misconceptions:

1. Christian conversion is a one-time event. While there is often a specific moment when a person chooses to follow Jesus, conversion is a lifelong

process of growing in faith and following Christ's example and not a one-time event.

2. Christian conversion is a result of personal effort. While individuals have a role to play in their own conversion, it is ultimately a work of God's grace and the power of the Holy Spirit.
3. Christian conversion requires a complete life overhaul. While conversion does involve turning away from sinful behaviors, it is also about embracing a new identity in Christ and experiencing a transformation of the heart.
4. Christian conversion is only for "good" people. Christianity is a faith for all people, regardless of their past mistakes or current struggles. Conversion is available to anyone who turns to Jesus with a repentant heart and a willingness to follow him.
5. Many people believe that becoming a Christian is a one-time event, but in the real sense of it, it is an ongoing process. While the moment of conversion is a misconception is that once you become a Christian, all of your problems will disappear. However, this is not the case because it is the beginning of the journey. Christians still face challenges and struggles, but they have the assurance that God is with them and will help them through difficult times.
6. Another misconception is that once you are saved, you can never lose your salvation. While it is true that salvation is a gift from God that cannot be earned or taken away, a person can turn away from their faith and reject God's grace.
7. In some other quarters, some people believe that conversion is just a matter of saying a prayer or performing specific actions. However, true conversion involves a sincere heart change and a commitment to follow Jesus as Lord and Savior.

So many people have this notion that Christian Conversion is not just about changing behaviors. There is a common misconception that Christian conversion is only about changing one's behavior. While behavior change is undoubtedly an important part of the process, true conversion involves much more than that. Firstly, it involves a

change of heart, where one's desires and priorities are transformed. This is often referred to as being "born again" in Christendom. Secondly, it involves reconciliation with God, in which the individual is no longer separated from Him by sin. This is only made possible through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross. Lastly, it involves a lifelong journey of growth and transformation as the Holy Spirit works in the individual to conform them to the image of Christ. This involves both inward and outward changes, but the focus is always on becoming more like Christ, rather than simply following a set of rules or behaviors.

Christian Educator

A Christian Educator is someone who performs the act of educating. Ilori (2002, 37) and Ola (2021, 7) both described a Christian educator as a Christian who teaches the Bible in church or as someone who teaches Christian religious knowledge in public, private, or interdenominational schools. What distinguishes a Christian educator from any educator is that he or she must act and reveal Christian attitudes and behaviour. A Christian educator is a significant stakeholder in Christianity. The Christian Educator does not operate on an island or in a space; he/she is given a mandate to fulfill, and the mandate is the Great Commission, the King's business in Matthew 28:19-20. Whoever will carry out this mandate, according to Ola (2021, 11), must possess certain personal qualities, such as patience, commitment, and love for God and humanity. He/she must be physically, emotionally stable, and mentally alert; above all, he/she must be spiritually sound, etc., to enable him/her to fulfill this God-given noble responsibility.

Beyond the personal qualities mentioned above, they must have conversion experience. This conversion experience must be personal, and it must be firsthand, what you experienced. Others comment include what Ladirin (2015:33) asserts that children's workers must be: born again, a growing Christian, disciples of Jesus Christ, living a consecrated life, filled and controlled by the Holy Spirit, men and women of integrity, loyal to God and God-ordained authority, students of the Bible, evangelistic, prayerful, teachable, and loving. This researcher adds that Christian educators must be faithful, trained, communicative, teachable, responsible, approachable, and patient listeners.

According to McDaniel and Richards (1973: 40) and ETA (1992:74), children's workers must cooperate with others and be good team members, super visible, understand and believe in the children to whom they minister, exemplary and enthusiastic, see working with children as a calling, privilege, challenge ministry as a trust from the Lord, apart from the spiritual qualifications needed for children's workers. According to Russell and Locke (1990:37), children's workers should be physically fit, emotionally mature, psychologically balanced, socially alert, intellectually alert and spiritually sound. This researcher adds that their fitness is essential so that children under their care will not be malnourished in some areas of development. He/she must be creative, a good planner and organiser, and always ready to learn.

According to McMinn (1991:89-90), children's workers must possess physical fitness, Mental alertness, reasonable social adjustment, emotional and deep spirituality. Every Christian educator should have an underlying philosophy of teaching and prayerfully ask for the leadership of the Holy Spirit that convicts the heart of men. The underlying philosophy of Christian teaching is that the individual has a personal experience of conversion and sufficient motivation for Christian growth. Not all conversions are dramatic. It is, however, important for every individual to encounter Christ to become a member of God's kingdom (Wells, 1989, p. 40).

Importance of Christian Conversion

The importance of Christian conversion cannot be overemphasized. This, according to Wells (1989, 27), is that "Christianity without conversion is no longer Christian because it involves forsaking sin, with its self-defying attitudes and self-serving conduct." Christian conversion is essential for salvation and a relationship with God. Jesus Himself said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). Without conversion, there is no forgiveness of sin and no hope for eternal life. Conversion brings one into the family of God, connecting one to other brethren in different cultures, nations, and colors. It makes an individual have a personal experience, stressing the importance of recognizing and admitting one's sin, receiving Christ as Lord and Saviour, and having a personal

relationship with God. As an evangelical, it also means one will want to share the message with others.

This ability to describe one's conversion experience is of utmost value in the Christian belief system, as converts are expected to evangelize non-believers. At last, Ryan (2000, 342) opined that it will be seen as evidence of Christian conversion through the practice of Christian doctrine. Although denominations vary in their practices, as do the practices of the churches within them, a new convert will most likely adhere to a prescribed set of beliefs outlined by an organized religious body. These practices, however, are modified by the church and individual preference, yet remain generally recognizable to an outsider.

Why is Conversion Necessary to Christian Educators

In conversion, Christian educators receive a new nature. The new birth helps him/her to change from self to God. There is the birth of new desires, hopes and ideals. A new relationship and new love are born within the converted. According to Ola, (2017, 17) Ajao, (2016, 318) that when Christian educators experienced a new birth it will have impact on their life which will in turn affect their teaching, shaping their world view and perspective about life in general, influence their curriculum and teaching methods Below are other roles of conversion (Klein, 2023), Ola, (2021, 45). In conversion, the Christian educator experiences a deep desire to know the Bible's teachings and their implications for the Christian life. A new way of life begins with a thirst for the study of scripture, alone or with like-minded Christians, for instruction in leading the Christian life.

In conversion, he/she receives a willingness to follow the Bible teachings and the Christian way of life wherever it may lead. It is not enough to hear; doing God's word is very important. Christian living demands applying the ideals of Jesus in a way that leads the individual to go beyond accepted social standards in all relationships. In conversion, he/she receives a power beyond their own, a power that God releases and which, if used, enables them to follow more closely the exacting demands of the Christian life. He/she will be able to do things naturally that others cannot do. Power to love the enemy, forgive those who wrong them, not to seek

revenge for any evil, etc. He received the only adequate foundation and motivation for Christian living—the abiding presence of the Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The teacher has an excellent task to help the individual Christian grow into maturity, to develop attitudes and systems of value consistent with the Christian ethic and to translate these attitudes into proper conduct.

Implications for Christian Educators

For Christian educators, understanding the theological basis for conversion is crucial. Their personal conversion shapes their worldview of education, and when this happens, it affects the content the educator transmits to learners. What the Christian educator should transmit to the learner must be "worthwhile." What a Christian educator transmits to the learner must be grounded in an eternal belief system; the belief that God is revealed in Jesus Christ is the source of all truth (Ajao, 2016, p. 383). It will change his/her method of teaching; rather than teaching to produce cognitively sound learners, his approach will be to win their hearts (effectively) so they are transformed into Christ's likeness. Methods are essential for every kind of teaching.

Lateju (2016:107) posits that it serves as a link between what is to be taught and the new experience the teacher prepares. Therefore, choosing a method that suits a topic becomes imperative for the teacher. Some of the methods of teaching include storytelling, memorization, and recitation, discussion, learning centers or activity areas, drama, playway and role-playing, demonstration, field trip, scripture search, panel discussion, question and answer, music, games, puzzles, project, puppetry and creative writing (Brubaker, 1999: 481 and Ayandokun, 2017:61).

Lateju (2016:107) adjudges that the essence of the method in the teaching of children is to convey what is to be learned to learners. It is also the servant of both the teacher and the learning, enabling the teacher to control learners' experience. It then shows that careful attention must be given to choosing the correct method. Ayandokun (2017:59) states that teachers' proper understanding of various teaching techniques sustains learners' interest throughout the teaching-learning process. It is because a teaching method is used to deliver learning materials. The Christian educator will

empower and guide the learners in their spiritual journeys. By embodying the transformative power of the gospel, educators can create an environment that encourages learners to explore and embrace their own faith.

Conclusion

This paper has looked at the necessity of a personal, transformative encounter with Christ that results in a new life marked by faith, regeneration, and ongoing spiritual growth. For Christian educators, this foundation is essential, guiding their mission to nurture and mentor learners in the faith. It is the candid submission of the writer that, as well as other qualities of educators, their conversion experience should be given emphasis. Without this experience, one wonders what they will be teaching and how they will teach.

References

1. Ajao, O. (2016). "Christian Educator." *Theological Educator Academic Papers: In Honour of Rev'd. Prof. O. G. Adetunji and Rev'd Dr. F. K Babalola of the Nigerian Baptist Theological Seminary, Ogbomosho*. Osogbo: Hirise Celebrity Publishers, 380-392.
2. Anthony, M. J. (2001). *Evangelical Dictionary of Christian Education*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic.
3. Alao, O. J. 2017. A socio-ethical Assessment of the Impact of Youth Migration on the growth of Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA). *Lagos State. Net Journal of Social Sciences*, 5(4): 68-77. Retrieved 25/4/2024
4. Ayandokun, E. O. (2015). *Biblical Nurture Through Effective Christian Education* Lagos: Glory Line Christian Publication.
5. Ayandokun, E. O. (2017). *Effective Christian Pedagogy: in Homes, Churches, and Schools (Making Teaching and Learning Delightful)*. Ibadan: Baptist Press.
6. Best, W. E. 1985. *Regeneration and Conversion*. Houston, Texas: South Belt Assembly of Christ.

7. Brubaker, J. (1986). "Methods and Materials for Children" in *Childhood Education in the Church. Revised and Expanded*. Chicago: The Moody Bible Institute.
8. Gillespie, V.B. (1993). *The Dynamics of Religious Conversion: Identity and Transformation Missiology*.
9. Ilori, J.A. (2002). *Philosophy of Christian Education in African Perspectives*. Bukuru-Jos: ACTS Book-Shop.
10. Ishola, S. A. (2019). Principles and Dynamics of Teaching/Principles of Integrated Teaching Class Notes
11. Ladirin, O. M. (2015). *Rebranding the Nation, Raising Godly Children Today*. Ibadan: Happy Home Enterprises.
12. Lateju, R. A. (2016). "Methods in Christian Teaching and Learning." *Principles and Dynamics of Integrated Christian Teaching and Learning*. International Council for Higher Education (ICHE) edited by Samuel Peni Ango. Ibadan: Baptist Press, 105-151.
13. McDaniel, E. & Richards, O. L. (1973). *You and Children*. Chicago: Moody Press.
14. Pazmino. R. W. (1997). *Foundational Issues in Christian Education. An Introduction to Evangelical Perspectives 2nd Edition*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books
15. Russell & Locke, V. (1990). *Evangelism and Church Growth*. Ibadan: Iyabode Printing Works.
16. Ryan, K.F. (2000). Conversion and the Self. In M.E. Miller & A.N. West (Eds.) *Spirituality, ethics, and relationships in adulthood: Clinical and theoretical explorations* Madison, CT: Psychosocial Press.
17. Wells, D. E. (1989). *Turning to God. Biblical Conversion in the Modern World*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker- Book House

18. Wayne, G. (1994). *Systematic Theology. An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*. Grand Rapids Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House.
19. Wilhoit, J. (1986). *Christian Education and the Search for Meaning*. Second Edition. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House.