



**PERCEPTION OF CHRISTIAN PARENTS IN  
NURTURING CHILDREN SPIRITUALLY AMONG  
KACHIN COMMUNITY**

**LABYA KHUN SAN**

**Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of  
MASTER OF ARTS  
IN  
CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY**

**Payap University**

May 2016



Title: Perception of Christian Parents in Nurturing Children Spiritually  
Among Kachin Community

Researcher: Labya Khun San

Degree: Master of Arts in Christian Theology

Advisor: Rev. Dr. Chuleepran Srisoontorn

Approval Date: 18<sup>th</sup> April, 2016

Institution: McGilvary College of Divinity, Payap University, Chiang Mai,  
Thailand

The members of the thesis examination committee:

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Committee Chair  
(Dr. Chaiyun Ukosakul)
  
2. \_\_\_\_\_ Committee Member  
(Rev. Assistant Prof. Dr. Datanun Boonyakiat.)
  
3. \_\_\_\_\_ Committee Member  
(Rev. Dr. Chuleepran Srisoontorn)
  
4. \_\_\_\_\_ Committee Member  
(Dr. Chananporn Jaisaodee)

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

This study would not have come into being without God's grace and the support of so many people who helped me throughout this journey. I give thanks and glory to God with all my heart and I would like to express my heartfelt thanks and gratitude to the following people.

I give thanks to the McGilvary College of Divinity (MCD) for giving me the chance to study the Word of God. I also would like to give special thanks to the church members from the Netherlands who have supported me with a full scholarship every year for the past three years so that I can pursue my education.

I am also very thankful to all the professors at MCD for teaching, guiding, and encouraging me with the love of God throughout my three years of academic study, and to my classmates who have been like brothers and sisters to me, always offering understanding, friendship, and help in my studies. I would also like to thank the Kachin Theological College as well for granting me a study leave and to Rev. Hkangda Tu Lum, who has been working as the pastor at Yangon Kachin Baptist Church for many years, for writing me a kind recommendation letter.

I owe my deepest gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Sakunee Kriangchaiporn, for guidance and encouragement and helping me to develop my understanding of the subject and to complete the writing of the study. I am also thankful to all of the Kachin Christian parents from three different churches in Myitkyina who graciously participated in my research for this project.

My heartfelt gratitude also goes to my parents, who encouraged and supported me with prayer for my study from the beginning to the end of each semester, and to all of my family members who have been praying for me as well as supporting me financially.

Labya Khun San

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Number of Pages: 54

Keywords: Nurturing Children, Role of Parents, Role of Church, Spirituality, Perception, Worldview

## **ABSTRACT**

This study is about Perceptions of Christian Parents in Nurturing Children among Kachin Community. The study will focus on Kachin Christian parents from three different churches in Myitkyina, Kachin state, Myanmar. The study has discovered how Kachin Christian parents is nurturing their children's spirituality how they understand the Christian way of parenting, and how that understanding affects how they parent their children by interviewing the twenty-three participants.

The idea of "nurturing the children spiritually" is very familiar to Kachin Christian parents, but practicing this in real life with understanding is more essential than simply knowing the method and being familiar with the idea. So, this study gives a description of how the participants actually practice this nurturing in real life and their perception of nurturing their children by analyzing the data issues on it. And then, this study aims to help, not only Kachin Christian parents, but also church leaders--pastors, ministers and Sunday school teachers--within the Kachin community to make sense of how to properly nurture children spiritually.

This study is divided into five chapters. Chapter one is an introduction and answers the question, “How did I come to this topic?” It also discusses the central research issue, its setting, and why spirituality is so important in the family. Chapter two gives a literature review, the historical background of the Kachin People, what they believed, how they became Christian, their understanding about God and Christian parenting, and how Kachin Christian parents have nurtured their children until now.

Chapter three discusses the methodology: how I went about scheduling and making the timeline for each interview, how I prepared the questions for my participants, the process of collecting data by using in-depth interviews, preparing the collected data for analysis, and the method of analysis. Then, chapter four presents the results of my research, i.e. parents’ understandings of the church’s role in nurturing children, parents' roles in nurturing their children, as well as parents' spiritual approach to nurturing their children.

As a final part, chapter five will present the suggestion/ implication for Kachin community and my church members, the ministers, the pastors and Sunday school teachers from Kachin churches and to the readers of this study. And then, the study will conclude with encouragement to realize how to develop in nurturing the children spiritually in daily life activities.

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS**

ATESEA = Association for Theological Education in South East Asia

KBC = Kachin Baptist Convention

KTCS = Kachin Theological College and Seminary

RQ = Research Question

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

This Independent Study is about the perception of Christian Parents in nurturing children spiritually within the Kachin community. It seeks to explore how Kachin Christian parents understand and practice nurturing Children spiritually as Christian parents. The participants of my study are mainly parents who have children between four and sixteen years old, living in Myitkyina, Kachin State, Myanmar. These parents attend three different churches which are all under the KBC. So, for this study, there were a total of 23 participants who are all Kachin Christian parents from three different churches of the KBC.

This study is divided into five chapters. The first chapter introduces the topic of my study and the background of my research. The second chapter provides a literature review. First, I will describe the origin of the Kachin peoples, culture, and understanding about God. Second, there is a section about how Kachin Christians are working under Christian education leaders. Third, the study looks at what the Bible says about Christian education.

Then, chapter three is about the methodology. This part deals with how and why I collected the data, how I persuaded my participants to get the point of my study, and what I asked my participants for in my study. Chapter four is the presentation of my data with twenty-three of my participants in detail. I believe that readers will understand my topic significantly better by reading this chapter. Finally, chapter five is a conclusion of my study and includes the implications I draw from the research results as well as my suggestions for further research.

## **1.1 How did I come to this topic?**

Nurturing the children in the Kachin community is very broad in many different areas and in different country. As Kachin people live in many different areas and countries, I have noticed that the understanding of Kachin parents who live outside of Myanmar and Kachin parents who live inside Myanmar is different when it comes to the question of how they nurture their children spiritually

At present, Kachin Christianity is already over one hundred years old<sup>1</sup> and has two theological seminaries, both of which are members of the ATESEA<sup>2</sup>. Many churches have also been planted with members in many different areas of Myanmar. Also, all the Christian departments of the KBC and KTCS--which I attended for my Bachelor of Theology--are located in Myitkyina, Kachin State, Myanmar. So, I chose the location, Myitkyina, for my study. I expect that this study will give insights through my research results to my readers, Kachin Christian parents, the pastors, ministers, Sunday school teachers and the missionaries who are working in the Kachin community.

## **1.2 Research Issue and its Setting**

Nurturing the children spirituality has been influential and becoming popular in churches all over the world, and of cause KBC is also promoting Christian parenting in the churches to improve nurturing the children spiritually. And, nowadays every parents can learn from everywhere (means from online) and from the trainers of the church or from the pastors / ministers who had already practicing in real life.

And the churches of KBC have been working on Children ministry and Sunday school as example. However, it could not describe exactly that do the parents or church

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<sup>1</sup> Marip Bawk San and Palawng Naw Tawng. 2007. The historical image of Kachin Theological College 1932-2007, Mg Mg Naing; Yangon.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

members really understand the purpose and goal of nurturing the children spiritually. Besides, most of the parents mentioned in chapter four as, children's spirituality depend on the church and the church is the only one who has authority to teach or to nurture the children's spirituality. Such as, the children's spirituality become implies more to the church's activities or works of the pastors, ministers and Sunday school teachers, and not absolutely to the parents only.

Concerning the Christian parenting, I ask permission to write down in my study to support this study to the Christian education leader of KBC at the moment, Sarama Zingtung Hkawn San (Sarama means woman minister) also said that in her interview as

*"Even we do parenting training in the church, I am not sure they really practice or not in the family. Actually, the parents they know how to nurture by attending the training and learning from bible study class, but in practical they are not strong enough in nurturing spirituality as we teach. For Example, showing love to the children. Actually, they love the children but they do not have time to show love to their children and some do not know how to show love. So, I always encourage to Kachin Christian parents that I meet to nurture the children with God's love, and I usually wrote the articles for the parents in KBC Christian journal. I hope in the future all Kachin Christian parents will know how to nurture the children spirituality. And, it is one of my implications to the Kachin Christian parents".*

Every Christian parent should not ignore the children's spirituality in nurturing, and implicating in every activities of nurturing the children to be more Christlikeness, because nowadays, online, movies, and games are influencing to the children in different way. Parents must aware of this too.

The reasons above call me to study the topic to find out the perceptions of Kachin parents in nurturing the children spiritually. The purpose of the central research issue is first, this study will contribute to the Kachin community leadership including pastors, church leaders, and Church education minister in gaining some insights of how to equip the parents to nurture their children. Second, Kachin Christian parents will be aware of parenting in the Christian way. Then, they will realize of the essentials of nurturing their Children. Third,

missionaries who work among Kachin community will gain some insights of Kachin's ways of nurturing, then ministering to them appropriately.

### **1.3 Why the Spirituality is so important in the Family?**

The children's spirituality is based on their parents. According to Bryan Nelson and Timothy Paul Jones, "strong family ministries equip Christian households not only to endure but also to engage in the spiritual realm".<sup>3</sup> In fact, spirituality is very important to the parents and to the children too. And, Thomas Sanders also summarized in his book review on *Family ministry: A comprehensive guide* as "family is composed of those who choose to be followers of Jesus Christ and who are caregivers for one another".<sup>4</sup> So, it proves the question why the parents need to nurture the children spiritually? And, it shows that the parents have responsibility to nurture the children's spirituality to be followers of Jesus Christ or to be more Christlikeness. Indeed, there is also important to know how to nurture the children's spirituality and how the parents views upon the children.

Vivienne Mountain also mentioned about Children's spirituality on his article as Children's spirituality is a broad subject with many definitions. The dominant theme of spirituality is through relationship and spirituality is a primal search for meaning that is as old as humanity itself. It is concerned both within and outside of religious traditions, as a search for integration and relational living, and the theme of spirituality is as an inner attribute in the creativity of all children, an awareness of connection. And, he mentioned that "for children

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<sup>3</sup> Jason Caillier, " Trained in the fear of God: Family ministry in theological, historical, and practical perspective" Christian Education Journal. Spring2013, Vol. 10 Issue 1, p192-196. *Education research complete, EBSCOhost.*

<sup>4</sup> Thomas Sanders, "Family ministry: A Comprehensive guide" Christian Education Journal. Fall 2013, Vol.10 Issue 2, p455-457. 3p. *Education Research Complete, EBSCOhost.*

the need for relationship is 'known' in a deep sense through the experiences in the very earliest stages of life".<sup>5</sup> It shows that nurturing the children spiritually is very important.

In fact, I really want to know the Kachin Christian parents' nurturing the children's spirituality, and the perceptions on nurturing the children spiritually. So, this study will observe and discover how the participants nurture and how they shape the children's spirituality. One of the resources describes the ministry philosophy as "the spiritual development of children is first, and foremost the responsibility of parents and that a church is best poised to assist rather than lead in that process".<sup>6</sup> This statement encourages me to do research as my independent study, and to gain insight of the study for all Christian parents, the pastors, ministers, Sunday school teachers, and the missionaries who are serving among Kachin community. And, this study will provide the perception of Christian parents in nurturing children spiritually among Kachin community.

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<sup>5</sup> Vivienne Mountain, "Four links between Child Theology and children's spirituality" Article: International Journal of Children's Spirituality. Aug2011, Vol. 16 Issue 3, p261-269. *Education research complete, EBSCOhost.*

<sup>6</sup> George Barna, "Transforming Children into Spiritual Champions" Regal Publishing: California, U.S.A. 2003. P.98.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature Review**

This chapter will explore the relevant literature concerning the topic of study. I have divided the chapter into three sections, each with one main point. First is the historical background of the Kachin People, the ethnic group in focus for this study. Second is a section on what Kachins believed in the past and how they eventually became Christian and developed their understanding about God. This second section is meant to provide the reader with a deeper understanding about the spiritual life of Kachin people. Third is the presentation of the view of several Kachin authors on the topic of Christian parenting and on how Kachin Christian parents are nurturing their children so far.

#### **2.1 Background of Kachin People**

The Kachin people make up the main ethnic group in focus for this study. This section provides information about them so that the reader will gain more knowledge about who the participants of this study are. In Kachin history, there has been much recorded information about the Kachins, but here I will describe only the important things—those things which are pertinent to my study. Thus, I will describe how Kachins lived in the past, how they nurtured their children, their culture and values, their location, as well as the activities of Kachin daily life.



### 2.1.1 Origin and Geography

Most of Kachin historians mentioned that Kachin peoples are an ethnic group who largely inhabit the Kachin hills in northern Burma's Kachin state in Myanmar. And, one of Kachin historians Marip Bawk San described in his article *"Kachins live not only in Myanmar, but also neighboring areas of China and India from long time ago. And, Kachins are an ethnic affinity of several tribal groups. In Myanmar, there have six different ethnic sub groups of Kachin: Jinghpaw, Lisu, Rawang, Lachid, Zaiwa and Lhaovo fall under the category of Kachin. Each has its own colorful traditional dress and each has its own dialect but "Jinghpaw" is the lingua franca"*.<sup>7</sup> Formerly Kachin were animists, and sacrificed livestock to their "Nats such as Jan Nat (Spirit of Sun), Mu Nat (Celestial Spirit), Tsu Nat (Ancestral Spirit) etc".<sup>8</sup> The word Kachins or Kachin is derived from Ga hkyeng or Red Soil, which was written as Kakhyengs (in plural form).<sup>9</sup>

Indeed, Ola Hanson, the missionary from South American Baptist to Kachin people, also described the geography of Kachin peoples in his book *"The Kachin: their customs and traditions"*. According to his book, most of Kachin live within the boundaries of British Burma, but large numbers inhabit the hill-country of western Yunnan, and smaller communities are found in Assam and along the borders of Tibet. And, the whole of northern Burma down to the 24<sup>th</sup> parallel is largely under Kachin influence. On the west side of the Irrawaddy river they are not strongly represented as on the east, but they are found as far south as Katha (my home town) and Wuntho, holding the hills in the Mogaung district, and in undisputed possession of the country north of Kamaing, the Jade-mines, and the whole of the Hukong valley. The hill-tract between Myitkyina and the Kampti valley is inhabited by the

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<sup>7</sup> Marip Bawk San, *"Ginru Ginsa Rum ai WunPawng Sha Ni (the origin of Kachins)"* (Uma Ning Hkawng Magazine, 2000) P.104-111.

<sup>8</sup> Ja Li, Pungga *"Jinghpaw a Hkap La Hkan Sa Shatup Lam: What Kachin Believes and Practice"* Vol.I & III 2nd Ed (Tain Tain Ta Ying Press, 2011) P.46-48.

<sup>9</sup> Lahtaw Zau Sam, *"Our Language: Kachin Research Journal 1800-1837"* No.III (Laiza Press: Kachin State, Myanmar, 2010)

Hkahku Kachins, and the Jingpo families are still numerous on the north-east border of Assam. And, formerly Kachins live the large plains in the Bhamo district and northern Shan state (eastern part of Myanmar).<sup>10</sup>

### 2.1.2 Culture

History has shown that Kachin villages set as a long and all the material that they used is wood and bamboo. And, every Kachin village picturesque entrance called "mashang". On each side of the road are placed a certain number of short, hewn or squared post (Idban), covered with rude pictures of grain, weapons, household articles and ornaments. These are "prayer-post". The figures represent as the providing "spirits" have their place just beyond and reminded of the communal need and wishes.<sup>11</sup>

Even in present day, we can see Kachin houses and villages traditionally on the mountain areas. And, the style of Kachin house and insight are the same setting. The houses are long and huge. Every longhouse has several fireplaces (or *dap* in Kachin) around which its life revolves. One *dap* is for cooking, another is where the men sit and talk, guests may sleep around the third, while a fourth is for the married son's family.<sup>12</sup> It is showing that Kachin peoples are dependent on each other like family, relatives and villagers, etc. and willing to help each other.

Traditionally, the dressing of women is black jackets with silver decoration and skirts with bright color, and the men wear black and wide pants, cover their heads with turbans: the

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<sup>10</sup> Ola Hanson, "*The Kachin: their customs and traditions*" (Kindle Edition, originally; American Baptist Mission Press: F. D. Phinney, SUPT, 1913) Kindle location 208-218.

<sup>11</sup> Pungga Ja Li, "*Jinghpaw a Hkap La Hkan Sa Shatup Lam: What Kachin Believes and Practice*)" Vol.I & III 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed, Tain Tain Ta Ying Press, 2011.

<sup>12</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, "*THE KACHINS: LORDS OF BURMA'S NORTHERN FRONTIER*" (Kindle Edition, BertilLintner Copyright © 2014, BertilLintner, Inc....) Kindle Location 237-238.

youths wear white turbans and the adults wear black turbans.<sup>13</sup> In the family, both the parents are very much respected by their offspring. And, Kachin people believe that the younger ones have responsibility to respect older ones in the society and like to spend the time in hunting and in collecting natural vegetables, and every woman is skilled in weaving for clothes".<sup>14</sup>

In the past, Kachin women are uncouth in the family. When asking a Kachin how many children he has, he will always give the number of boys, the girls are not worth mentioning. When baby born, the birth of a girl is announced with "it is only a girl".<sup>15</sup> However, there is no gender and sex dominance in a family these days. In the family, the elders used to teach the children that "A gift must be presented and accepted by holding out both hands. And, one must not eat in the presence of visitors or strangers without first asking their permission, nor must anyone leave a house or a place without first asking, "May I (or we) go?"<sup>16</sup>

In Kachin culture, traditional dance or *Manau Dance* is one of very important things among Kachin community. In fact, the Kachin researchers had been shown that the *Manau* dance rooted in animistic religion and the *Manau* ground where the ceremony takes place is the cultural center of Kachin communities. However, after Kachin became Christian, the meaning of Manau dance and styles turned into kind of Kachin Christian worshipping to God.<sup>17</sup> The question is why Manu dance is so important to Kachin people? According to the history of Kachin, it is relating to Kachin Christian faith and every Kachin

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<sup>13</sup> Hanson, Ola "*The Kachin: their customs and traditions*" American Baptist Mission Press: F. D. Phinney, SUPT, 1913.

<sup>14</sup> Hanson, Ola "*The Kachin: their customs and traditions*" American Baptist Mission Press: F. D. Phinney, SUPT, 1913.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid

<sup>17</sup> Ja Li, Pungga "*Jinghpaw a Hkap La Hkan Sa Shatup Lam: What Kachin Believes and Practice*" Vol.I & III 2nd Ed (Tain Tain Ta Ying Press, 2011) P.37-52.

family value it and tries to participate in it. Besides, *manau* dance is showing Kachin's Christian belief and unity of Kachin Peoples.<sup>18</sup>

## **2.2 Kachin Christianity**

Along this study, I mentioned Kachin peoples' characteristics, culture and what Kachin peoples believed before Christianity. Here, I would like to describe how Kachin people became Christians and how Kachin peoples are applying the word of God practically in daily life activities at home, at church, school, etc., and how Kachin parents are nurturing the children spirituality.

### **2.2.1 How Kachin Peoples Became Christians**

As I mentions in the origin of Kachins, originally ancient Kachins were animists. According to the history, Rev. J. Lyon and his wife came first to Bhamaw, Kachin State, northern part of Myanmar which is living Kachin peoples as missionaries in 1878, but Lyon contracted malaria within a week, and died within a month. After him, Rev. Roberts came to Bhamaw (the same place) in 1878, and started opening the mission work among the Kachin people. Then, Rev. Dr. Ola Hanson came to Bhamaw in 1890.<sup>19</sup> He is the one who did written form of Kachin or Jinghpaw using the Roman alphabet between 1890 and 1892, and created Kachin writings, and translated the Bible into Kachin. Later he finished an English-Jinghpaw (Kachin) dictionary with over 10,000 words, and he handed the Bible to the Kachin people in 1926.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Marip Bawk San, "*Ginru Ginsa Rum ai WunPawng Sha Ni (Kachin's unity)*" Uma Ning Hkawng Magazine, 2000.

<sup>19</sup> Tang Neng, M. "*Hkalup Hpung Sasana a Shingdu Labau (The History of Baptist Mission to Kachin)*" KTC (Kachin Theological College) Chyum Jawng Shanan Magazine, 2001-2002. P.14-17.

<sup>20</sup> Lahtaw Zau Sam, "*Our Language: Kachin Research Journal 1800-1837*" No.III (Laiza Press: Kachin State, Myanmar, 2010) P.192.

In the history of Kachin Baptist, the first seven Kachin converts were baptized on March 19, 1882, and the Kachin church was founded in that year. Later on, Kachin Baptist churches organization was founded in 1890. And, it had a centennial Jubilee Celebration in 1977 where about 100,000 Christians gathered in Jaw Bum (Centennial Mountain) in Myitkyina. And, the record shows that 6,214 believers were baptized in this Jubilee Celebration.<sup>21</sup>

One thing that I would like to express is under the KBC there are two main Theological Colleges (Kachin Theological College in NawngNang, Myitkyina and in Kutkai, Shan State). And, KBC opens one Christian Educational Leadership Training School at Nawng Nang, and many vocational schools and maintains one press called the Hanson Press.<sup>22</sup> And, I will mention how theological seminary is important and influence to Kachin Christian parents in Chapter 4.

Continuously, Kachin peoples accepted Jesus Christ as savior and leave old superstitions behind them after missionaries came. And, Kachin people had opportunity to learn education including about Christianity in the Kachin Christian Schools that the missionary opened in Bhamo, Myitkyina, and Namhkam.<sup>23</sup> Now a day, these schools were already occupied by Myanmar government. According to Kachin newspaper which is published around nineteen century proves that Kachin Christian parents get knowledges through this Kachin newspaper.

In the newspaper, there were mentioning about the Gospels of Jesus Christ, missionary, Christian faith, education, culture, politic, world news, economic, marriage, funeral, Kachin story, parenting, etc. Indeed, one of Kachin writers also described about "the

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<sup>21</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, "*The History of Kachin Baptist convention 1877-2003*" (Hanson Memorial Press, Myitkyina, 2008)

<sup>22</sup> Bawk San, Marip and Palawng Naw Tawng "*The historical image of Kachin Theological college 1932\_2007*" (Mg Mg Naing; Yangon, 2007) P.12-21.

<sup>23</sup> Rev. Dr Ola Hanson "*THE KACHINS: Their Customs And Traditions*" (Kindle Edition, originally; American Baptist Mission Press: Yangon, 1913)

first Kachin newspaper and how Kachin newspaper is giving knowledges to the Kachin parents" in his article<sup>24</sup> So far, the study shows that Kachin peoples see true God through missionary and believe that Kachin peoples are the children of God. The question is how much Kachin people are faithful to God, how did they give the name of God and why? The study shows that the understanding of animist Kachin peoples' God and Kachin Christians' God has the same meaning and use the same word. In detail, I will mention in the following topic about that.

### **2.2.2 Kachin's Understanding about God**

Before I mention how Kachin people understand about God from the Bible, I would like to describe what the Kachin believed and worship traditionally, and using the word about God in Kachin. Throw back of the Kachin history shows that Kachin peoples are animism and worship to the spirits. Some researcher mentions that Kachin used to offer the gifts and sacrifices to many spirits, and gives the name to Great Spirit as Karai Kasang in Kachin. It means God which is a sign of supernatural power above all nats (spirits) whose shape of form exceeds man's ability to comprehend. In the Bible also "Karai Kasang" is the term which Ola Hanson used for God in his translation of the scriptures.<sup>25</sup> Under this Great Spirit, there are many spirits that Kachin peoples used to worship in the past. They are Sky Spirit (in Kachin = Mu Nat —the word "Nat" means a spirit Lord) are ultimately children of the androgynous Creator (in Kachin=Woishun-Chyanun).

The second is the chief of the earth spirits (in Kachin= Ga Nat) as the highest class of spirit. Third, the youngest sky spirit (nat) is *Madai Nat* in Kachin, who can be approached

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<sup>24</sup> Sau Ka Mai, "Shawng Ningnan Pru ai Jinghpaw Shi Laika (the first Newspaper of Kachins)" Chyurum Shalat Magazine, 2011-2012, P.32-33.

<sup>25</sup> Zau Sam, Lahtaw "Our Language: Kachin Research Journal 1800-1837" No.III (Laiza Press: Kachin State, Myanmar, 2010) P.185-197.

only by chiefs, whose ultimate ancestor was his eldest brother and *Ningawn-wa*, who forged the earth. And, there had many other spirits too. Especially, Kachin people believed that a direct daughter of *Madai Nat* (the youngest sky spirit) was the wife of the first Kachin aristocrat.<sup>26</sup> It means that Kachin peoples are the ancestors of *Madai Nat*. So, when the missionary told about the children of God, it made sense to them.

On this point, I am sure that Kachin Peoples already believed in the creator God, the God of omnipotent, Omniscience and Omnipresence, and used to call the name of "God" (Karai Kasang) at the time of need. There are some differences calling God's name among kachin people, such as "*Karai Kasang, Hpanwa Ningsang Chyewa Ningchyang, and Lamu Madu Ga Madu*".<sup>27</sup> The word means the owner of heaven and earth. This is what Kachin knew from our forefathers' time as *Hpanwa Ningsang, Chyewa Ningchyang* is the same as the one who says "*I Am who I am*" in the Bible. In fact, the Knowledge of God is contextual among Kachin peoples because God's revelation is contextual too. And, this is showing that God lives among different people and situations.

The Bible also tells that God is the truth and the existence of one supernatural Supreme Being is beyond human understanding. This fact makes sense that all people belong to the same Supreme Being, and yet, they have different names or designation for that one. The interested thing is the Hebrew Bible itself has different names for the same God. All the things that I mention in above about God are how Kachin people see God and understand about God. In brief, God of the Kachin peoples is as,

- i. *Karai Kasang, Karai Wa (Father)*
- ii. *Hpanwa Ningsang, Chyewa Ningchyang (Creator)*

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<sup>26</sup> San Awng, Magam Nshang "*Chyurum Wunpawng Sha ni Jaw Jau ai Jinat Ni (The Spirits or gods that Kachin Peoples worship)*" Buga Shanan Magazine, Jinghpaw Wunpawng Laili Laika the Htung Hkying Hpung (Kachin Culture and Culture committee, 1984) P.60-62.

<sup>27</sup> Chyang Ngau "*Jinghpaw Wunpawng Amyu Sha ni kaw na, Karai Kasang a Lagaw Hkang (God's works on Kachin Peoples)*" Myihtoiima Magazine, Kachin Theological college, Nawng Nang Vol.18, Aung Da Ma(Ye Kyaw); Myitkyina, 2003.

iii. *Lamu Madu Ga Madu (Almighty God)*

So first, what are these names in dealing with Kachin context? And second, how do Kachin people establish the contextual understanding of God for Kachin Christianity? For these questions, I will mention in the next sub topic.

### **2.2.3 Kachin Christian Family**

Under this topic, I will divide as three parts. First, how Kachin parents understand about Sunday school and what the church is helping the parents in nurturing the children spirituality. Second, Kachin Parents' understanding about discipleship and what the church is giving knowledge to the Kachin parents. Third will be the way of Kachin Christian parenting in daily life activities.

And, Rev. Sabaw Sinwa Naw (pastoral care and counseling professor in KTCS) also mentions that "Christian family must be Healthy family and strong family".<sup>28</sup> First, healthy family means respecting each other in the family, planning family time, communicating openly, helping each other, serving each other in spirituality, and overcoming together when the difficulty meet. This all things are to practice within family to build up trust and healthy relationship in daily life activities. Of cause these things are important. If the family members do not have respect in the family, the family cannot have healthy relationship. At the same time, if the children or the parents do not help and serve or support each other, the family will not develop in essential needs and spirituality. All the family members have to share sadness, happiness, joyfulness, gratefulness, sorrows, etc. and overcome together.

The second, strong family is also very important for the Christian family. Strong family show that the family's spiritual development is not only within the family but also to

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<sup>28</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, " *San Seng Shim Lum ai Dinghku: Tsaban 21 Hkristan Dinghku (21<sup>st</sup> Century Christian Family)*" (Moon offset: Yangon, 2011) P.55-56.



spread out from the family to others. And, he described that the following qualitative should have in the strong family.

1. Every family member has to understand the rules and regulations of the family clearly.
2. Every family member has communication with others and participates in Church activities.
3. Respect others attitudes and ideas.
4. The children must respect their parents and love parents as God is love.
5. Encourage each other in the family.
6. Patients
7. Study the word of God together in the family
8. Pray together and share the testimony in the family.
9. Makes Christ Center in the family.<sup>29</sup>

It is reminding again to the parents that Jesus Christ is the center in nurturing the children. In fact, spirituality of the children is depending on what the parents are teaching to the children and how they lead in the family. And, the parents should know that the children need "Love, Security, Acceptance, Discipline, Independence, and Recognition".<sup>30</sup> In the book "*Joy Start Here*", it mentioned that people needs "**joy**" at home.<sup>31</sup> It proves that the parents have responsibility for the children to have joyfulness at home and all the family members also have to help each other to have joy at home.

## 2.3 Parenting

As the study mentions above, parenting is very important for those who are nurturing the children at home. And, the parents need to know how to nurture their own children.

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<sup>29</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, "*San Seng Shim Lum ai Dinghku: Tsaban 21 Hkristan Dinghku (the family that can give security: 21<sup>st</sup> Century Christian Family)*" (Moon offset: Yangon, 2011) P. 58-59.

<sup>30</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, "*Sharin Achyin nga ai Dinghku: San Seng Shim Lum ai Dinghku: Tsaban 21 Hkristan Dinghku (the family who has teaching: 21<sup>st</sup> Century Christian Family)*" (Moon offset: Yangon, 2011) P.25.

<sup>31</sup> E. James Wilder, Edward M. Khouri, Chris M. Coursey and Shelia D. Sutton, "*Joy Start Here*" Sherperd's House: East Peoria. 2013.

Indeed, the important thing is the Christian parents are different from non-Christian parents. So, the Christian parents have to learn parenting in Christian way. In fact, I will describe as Biblical parenting, Christian parenting, and Kachin ways of parenting so far.

### **2.3.1 Biblical Parenting**

In the Bible, we can see how God is teaching the parents to nurture their children according to the will of God. According to Biblical tradition, God teaches that *"You shall teach them to your sons, talking of them when you sit in your house and when you walk along the road and when you lie down and when you rise up"* (Deuteronomy 11:19). Both parents were to be involved in the instruction of their children. Then, in Proverbs 22:6 we see *"Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it"*. So, the Bible is, in a sense, like the textbook of Christian parenting and it provides the direction, models of education, methodology, as well as a rationale for Christian Education.

According to the Biblical tradition, parents have responsibility to educate the children and home was placed primarily focus of parenting in the family. Proverbs 1:8 also describing that *"Listen, my son, to your father's instruction and do not forsake your mother's teaching"*. The children are to listen and obey the teaching of their parents. In the New Testament, the apostle Paul also expresses the parents how to nurture the children in Ephesians 6:4 *"Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord"*. So, James Riley Estep Jr. states as,

*"If the Scripture is the content of Christian instruction as God's covenant with his peoples, the Christians' reflection, application, obedience, implications and life transformation have to base on the scripture".<sup>32</sup>*

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<sup>32</sup> James R. Estep Jr., Michael J. Anthony And Gregg R. Allison *"A Theology for Christian Education"* (B&H Publishing Group: Nashville, Tennessee, 2008) p.58.

Indeed, the biblical parenting is building up the spiritual formation of the individual in the family and it can grow through devotion, relationship, worship service, and sharing knowledges, obeying the word of God.

### **2.3.2 The Roles of Christian Parenting**

Basically, the role of Christian parenting is shaping the children's spirituality in Christ to know the true God, and to be mature in spiritual life. On the other hand, the Christian parents have to be the models of the children and effective by studying the word of God, teaching the words of God to the children, and applying in daily life, because the children are learning from the parents from their childhood life. In fact, Diane Wilson mentioned that "the parents must always offer their children's differences to God in prayer and the Holy Spirit will reveal the truth in each child's heart".<sup>33</sup> It means that the parents have to submit the children to God and have to trust God to teach and to guide the children's life.

And, John M. Dettoni also mentions three important actions to nurture the children in biblical way\_ encouraging, comforting, and urging to be mature in Christ. At first, the parents should stand in relationship to encourage the children to learn not only spiritual things, but also for holistic development. Second, the parents must help to their children to become comfortable in transformative living. At last, the parents must help to urge to bear witness and to testify in their lives.<sup>34</sup> In fact, Ellen G. White also mentioned as

*"True education is not the forcing of instruction on an unready and unreceptive mind. The mental powers must be awakened, the interest aroused. For this, God's method of teaching provided. He who created the mind and ordained its laws, provided for its development in accordance with them. In the home and the*

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<sup>33</sup> Diane Wilson "Christian Parenting" (Kindle Location 148-149) Copyright © 2013, Diane Wilson, Inc... Kindle Edition. (Kindle Location 163).

<sup>34</sup> Gangel, Kenneth O. and Howard G. Hendricks "The Christian Educator's Handbook on Teaching: A Comprehensive Resource on the Distinctiveness of true Christian Teaching" (Baker Books: Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1998) p. 17.

*sanctuary, through the things of nature and of art, in labor and in festivity, in sacred building and memorial stone, by methods and rites and symbols unnumbered, God gave to Israel lessons illustrating His principles and preserving the memory of His wonderful works. In the arrangements for the education of the chosen people it is made manifest that a life centered in God is a life of completeness".*<sup>35</sup>

And she said "parenting is a process; and a long one for that matter. It has been seen that the best way to reinforce positive behavior is to reward it and show love for such behavior".<sup>36</sup> In fact, I will describe how Kachin Christian parents are using the method and their parenting style in the following sub topic.

### **2.3.3 Kachin Parenting Overview**

Most of Kachin parents follow traditional way of teaching to the children. The parents are authoritative persons in the family, and the children must listen. However, now a day Kachin's way of parenting becomes changing and they are more focusing on Biblical parenting. In chapter 4, I will mention some parents' worldviews on parenting to give some lights in order to understand the spiritual aspect of parenting.

Now a day, Kachin pastors and Christian Education leaders of the churches try to teach parenting training to all the parents from the church. One of Kachin Christian educator who gives parenting training around the churches of Kachin community mentioned that *"everyone in the family must know true God and have relationship with God, and the parents must show God's love to the children and must help the children to become mature in spirituality"* and expressed three objectives of Christian parenting as;

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<sup>35</sup> Ellen G. White *"Education"* (Kindle Locations 434-439). Copyright © 2010, Ellen G. White Estate, Inc... Kindle Edition.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibit.* (Kindle Location 189).

- A. *Relationship with God is priority in the family\_father, mother and the children are to have relationship with God closely in daily life activities, and to know who God is.*
- B. *God (Jesus Christ) center in the family John 15:5-7.*
- C. *Maturing Spirituality as daily activities in the family. To fill with spiritual fruitfulness like patient, kind, no envy, no jealous, no proud, no selfishness, it is based on I Corinthian 13.*<sup>37</sup>

It shows that parents' thoughts, understanding, and activities are how much important in daily life activities for the children's spirituality.

Concerning the Christian parenting, there is also important to do "*Pre-Marital Counseling*" before married with the pastor. How it is relating with parenting? And why it is also so important? There have three main purposes of pre-marital counseling

1. *to know basic essential needs in the family, to be strong in faith, and to respect each other,*
2. *to know the consequences and effectiveness of marriage,*
3. *to love God and to be example as Christian family.*<sup>38</sup>

Otherwise, if marriage couple knows before their marriage, he/she can prepare heart, mind and the essential needs/quality for parenting, so that the whole family will grow up spiritually in life. So, Pre-marital Counseling may effect in parenting, and so far Kachin pastors are practicing it in the church, and guiding to get knowledge about the meaning of married, family, and spirituality.

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<sup>37</sup> Dashi Hkawn Tsin, "*Hkristan Dinghku a Matut Mahkai ai Lam (Christian Family's relationship): Tsaban 21 Hkristan Dinghku (21<sup>st</sup> Century Christian Family)*" (Moon offset: Yangon, 2011) P.39-40.

<sup>38</sup> Sabaw Sinwa Naw, "*hkungran Hkyen Ai Ni hpe Lanu Lahku Lam Bau Ai Lam (Pre-Marital Counseling)*" (Hanson Press: Myitkyina, 2012) P.6-7.

### 2.3.3.1 Through Sunday school

In general, most of Kachin Christian parents send their children to Sunday school class to study the word of God. Such as, the churches are also trying to teach Sunday school and developing the teaching skill in every church. According to the KBC Christian education guideline, there are three main important themes of Sunday school.

1. *Teach the truth of God's words from the Bible.*
2. *Teach to become believers in Christ.*
3. *Encourage every Church member to participate in Church activities*

In fact, each church are to teach Sunday School by dividing the classes age by age like KG, Primary, Junior, Junior High, youths, young adult and adult on every Sunday to grow up the children's spirituality. Otherwise, it is to be mature in spirituality in every age. The paradigm of Kachin church for Sunday school shows that how the church is helping the spirituality of the people.<sup>39</sup> Look at on the page of Appendix picture 1.

And, the purpose of teaching Sunday school is

- a) *To understand God's love and share to others as well, and to experience the work of Holy Spirit, and to be faithful in Christ.*
- b) *To know that every human beings are created by God and to learn and study the word of God and Bible insights.*<sup>40</sup>

Indeed, the church sends Sunday school teachers to Sunday school workshop to understand more how to teach the children and how to communicate with parents of the children, and to teach the word of God to the children and to shape the children's spirituality.

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<sup>39</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, "KBC Hkristan Hpaji Matsun Laika (Christian Education Guide Book of KBC (Kachin Baptist Convention))" 6<sup>th</sup> Ed (Hanson Press: Myitkyina, 2011) P.29.

<sup>40</sup> Zingtung Hkawn San "23<sup>rd</sup> KBC Christian Education leadership training and workshop reports" KBC Christian Education Journal, vol.9 (November 2015) p.10-11.

So, "the Christian education leader of the church or the pastor must be ready to help the parents in nurturing the children and have to prepare well to give guideline to the parents".<sup>41</sup>

### **2.3.3.2 Through Discipleship**

George Barna defines that "Christian discipleship is spiritual formation or spiritual maturity, and the key players of discipleship include parents, teachers, pastors, church staff, mentors, program directors, and so forth".<sup>42</sup> In fact, the church and the parents need to work together for the children spiritual or to make disciple the children. Here, this is how the pastors or Christian education leaders of the church are working spiritual formation or making discipleship in the church.

According to the reports in KBC Journal, the churches are sending the church members who are working in the church or who are willing to work for the children, to *LAB School TOT training* (for those who are interesting to serve / teach Sunday School in the church both lay persons male and female and persons who already graduated from seminary), *Legal Consultation of ECCD Law training* (for those who interested in take caring the children and who wants to serve in Church kindergarten) , *Christian family teaching training* (for the pastors who are going to teach the parents from the church), *Christian Education leadership training* (especially for the ministers who are working in the church). These all things are to nurture the children spirituality in the church and at home. And, the following lists are the results of KBC discipleship mission so far in Myanmar;<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> \_\_\_\_\_, "KBC Hkristan Hpaji Matsun Laika (Christian Education Guide Book of KBC (Kachin Baptist Convention))" 6<sup>th</sup> Ed (Hanson Press: Myitkyina, 2011) P.20-22.

<sup>42</sup> George Barna "Transforming Children into Spiritual Champions" (Regal: Ventura, California, U.S.A. 2003) P.97.

<sup>43</sup> Zingtung Hkawn San, "23<sup>rd</sup> KBC Christian Education leadership training and workshop reports" KBC Christian Education Journal, vol.9. November 2015. p.19.

<b>No.</b>	<b>Titles</b>	<b>Total amounts</b>
1.	<i>Sunday School Classes</i>	704
2.	<i>Sunday School teachers</i>	2,728
3.	<i>The students who attend Sunday School</i>	57,210
4.	<i>Mission Boarders</i>	47
5.	<i>Orphanage Boarders</i>	13
6.	<i>Kindergartens</i>	648
7.	<i>ECCD teachers</i>	309

These all works are supporting the children to become disciples of Jesus Christ and helping the parents in nurturing the children spiritually. In fact, Rev. Nhkum Pawlu mentions that making discipleship is one of the works of Christian Education, and the responsibility of all the believers. So, he describes three main objectives as,

1. *All the believers have to attend the discipleship training*
2. *All the disciples are to do evangelism to nonbelievers*



*3. All the disciples are to do mission at home especially to the children and participate in the activities of the Church.*<sup>44</sup>

The literature in this chapter provide the framework, and also Kachin parenting in the present time. They serve as backdrop to gain more understanding about Christian parenting how to nurture the children spiritually and it is providing the essential needs for the Christian parents and the pastors, Sunday school teachers and for the whole society. And, the study is teaching that nurturing the children's spiritual is a long term process and it must go till the end of life. Moreover, it is reminding to the Christian parents to nurture the children to be more Christlikeness and to be closer with God. On the other hand, the parents are the one who guide their children to see true God and to walk in the right way with Jesus Christ. In fact, the study will provide how Kachin Christian parents nurture the children in chapter four.

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<sup>44</sup> Rev. Nhkum Pawlu, "*Hkristan hpaji a Masa the Magam Bungli Ni: KBC Hkristan Hpaji Matsun Laika* (the Role and functions of Christian Education: *Christian Education Guide Book of Kachin Baptist Convention*)" 6<sup>th</sup> Ed (Hanson Press: Myitkyina, 2011) P.17.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Methodology**

This chapter describes the method I used to gain information for my study. Twenty-three Kachin Christian parents participated for this study through interviews. These participants are from three different churches under the KBC in Myitkyina, Kachin State, Myanmar. In this chapter I would like to describe in detail the method that I used during this research. First, I show how I went about scheduling the interviews and preparing the questions for my participants. Second, I give an outlines of the process of collecting data by means of the in-depth interviews already mentioned. Third, I describe the process of preparing the collected data for analysis and, then, explain the method of analysis.

#### **3.1 Timeline for Interviews and Question Preparation**

The interviews for this study took a total of three weeks to complete. Because the participants are all located in Kachin State, Myanmar and I am located in Chiang Mai, Thailand, the interviews all needed to be done either via email or over the phone. Thus, the interviews were scheduled ahead of time and then conducted via emails and phonecalls.

The first day, the interview started with only one participant. Certain people, who had already agreed to do an interview ended up not being able to participate. However, most of the participants helped me out by referring and introducing me to others potential participants. Thus, by means of this type of “snow balling” and the participants' willingness to help, interview data were collected from twenty three participants in a period of three weeks. The research questions (RQs) that I prepared for my participants are as following,

1. How do you understand the idea of spiritual nurturing?

2. What do you think the church's role should be in the spiritual development of your child?
3. When do you normally send your children to church and why?
4. What do you do for the children's spirituality at home?
5. How do you support the children in their spiritual formation?
6. Do you think you should learn Christian parenting for your children?

A few of my participants only answered some RQs because they said they were not comfortable answering certain ones. Most of my participants, however, answered all RQs willingly.

The reason that I planned to do the interviews with these questions for my study was to gain some insights into how Kachin Christian parents are nurturing their children's spirituality. Then, I prepared to do my study as my topic about one year. Also, I decided to do research for my Kachin community, the leaders of the church, the pastors, ministers and Sunday school teachers. I expect them to gain some insight from this study. This is why I decided to do research and how I scheduled the timeline and questions for this study.

### **3.2 The Process of Collecting data by using in-depth Interviews**

Before the date of interview in which I would actually ask the questions, I sent the basic research information to the participants by phone and mail. This information was first approved by MCD's independent study committee, which permitted the research survey to proceed. With this approval, I continued on with my research by interviewing each participant. The following are the different stages showing how I interviewed my participants.

Stage one: Arrival

Stage two: Introducing the research

Stage three: Beginning the interview

Stage four: During the interview

Stage five: Ending the interview

Stage six: After the interview

#### Stage one: Arrival

Most of the interviews were done at the participants' home. However, some of the participants were met at church, where the interviews were also carried out. As soon as the participants and I met, we began the conversation by introducing ourselves, shaking hands, and talking a bit about family and works. After that I introduced the content of the study, explaining to them more specifically about the interview, and then requested their help in the study by participating in the interview.

#### Stage two: Introducing my research topic

After the participants understood the context of the study, I started to introduce the research topic, described the objectives of the study, and its potential benefits. In fact, the participants did not worry about this issue because the issue is already very familiar to them and they are convinced that this issue will benefit the next generations as well as aged pastors. I also asked permission to do a recording of the interview to help me to remember the its content later on. I wrote down their names and the date in my record book to know how much I got the participants.

#### Stage three: Beginning the interview

After I had permission from the participant, I started the conversation naturally and began the interview with the questions that I had prepared in order to collect the information regarding various aspects of my study including their past experiences, their present situation,

and their future expectations. I tried to open up the conversation to the participants so they could feel involved in it throughout and to give them confidence in answering the questions.

#### Stage four: During the interview

During the period of conversation, I gave a strong effort to concentrate and act as a good listener, using active listening techniques such as eye contact, verbal pauses and exclamations like “um”, “aw”, etc. However, sometimes the participants started going away from the topic, so I had to help them come back to my topic so that I could get to the points of my research that I needed. Sometimes it took up to half an hour of conversation for just one question. The amount of time spent on one question really depended on the participant's knowledge and emotional response. I did not try to have them only give answers directly related to my questions, but rather tried to help them speak about what they had experienced in their life.

#### Stage five: Ending the interview

Before finishing the conversation, I asked them if they wanted to say or add anything else concerning this study. I asked them in that way both to show them that the conversation was going to end and that I wanted to confirm with them what they had already said. After the conversation was finished, I thanked them for participating in this process, and encouraged them to continue in the process of nurturing their children's spirituality. Finally, I prayed for them, said good bye and departed.

### Stage six: After the interview

After the interview, I still remained in contact with my participants through email if I had any further questions to ask regarding my research. I also continued to encourage them to nurture their children's spirituality. After collecting the data, I organized it all in one folder and listened many times to how the participants talked about nurturing their children's spirituality during our conversations.

### **3.3 Preparing Research data for analysis and doing the analysis**

In this part, I first transcribed the content from the recording. Then, I followed my research advisor's guidelines regarding the analysis of the data. First, I listened to the recording and wrote down the significant parts. Second, I analyzed the themes in what the participants mentioned about nurturing spirituality. Third, I arrange the sub titles to write down the study. Fourth, I worked to find the solutions needed in order to complete my objectives.

As a summary of my methodology for this case study, I have come to realize that analyzing the human communication is not easy, but I would say that it can show the reality of human life, help others to see the truth and give them knowledge of how to practice these principles in their daily lives. This study in particular gives aims to give special insight into how Kachin Christian parents have been nurturing spirituality in their children so far. The following chapter will mention what the participants said, including their understanding, and either how they really act or practice according to their understanding, i.e. the understanding and method behind how they go about nurturing their children's spirituality.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Research Results**

This chapter provides the research results from the interviews conducted during my research for this project about nurturing children's spirituality. The participants provided useful data by answering these questions: How do you understand spiritual nurturing? What do you expect from the church in nurturing your children's spirituality? When do you normally send your children to church and why? What do you do for the children's spirituality at home? How do you support the children in their spiritual formation? Do you think you should learn Christian parenting for your children?

To get the points of the study, the twenty-three parents helped as participants. The participants, especially, are from three churches of KBC (Kachin Baptist Convention) in Myitkyina to support my study. From the interview, three themes emerge from the data regarding the perceptions of the parents in nurturing, as follows.

#### **4.1 Parents' Understanding of Church's Role in Nurturing Children**

According to the interviews, generally I found that the parents expect the church to provide for three aspects of their children's spiritual nurturing: spiritual aspects, social aspects and educational aspects. Firstly, I would like to describe the spiritual aspect of what the participants expect from the church in nurturing their children.

### 4.1.1 Teaching Biblical Knowledge

Some of the participants expect the church to be the one who guides the way of the children's spirituality. And, they send their children to church regularly, encouraging them to participate in every activity held by the church. On the other hand, they place an expectation on the church for the children. They trust the pastors and Sunday school teachers as spiritual leaders for them and their children. Parents believe the church is the only one with authority to teach, so they are eager and willing to follow the church's teaching. One of the participants said,

*"We send the children to the church regularly on Sunday because the children have to learn insights from the Bible that we do not teach them at home. Another thing is we trust the pastors and Sunday school teachers in teaching the word of God and to develop our children's spiritual life".*

This participant shows that they support the church's authority in teaching and nurturing their children in a spiritual way. In addition to this, some participants expect the church to instruct them in knowledge, not only from the Bible, but also regarding spiritual aspects of life, i.e. Christian ethics, faith, practical spiritual works, etc. They believe that children will grow spiritually through knowledge by hearing and seeing. So, the church is a place to find how to live one's life. To this point, one of the participants also said that

*"We have five children. The reason that we send our children to the church is to learn how to live with Christlikeness from the pastors and Sunday school teachers who teach them, and to know the value of life, because the children listen to their teachers more than they listen to their parents. We believe that they will learn something from the church for their spiritual life by going to church regularly. So, we encourage them to participate in every activity in church and we often go to the pastors' house with the children to pray and let the pastor talk with our children".*



In fact, the parents are submitting the lives of their children to God so that they might be children of God through a relationship with the pastor of the church. According to my participants, most of them believe the church is the place where the Bible is taught and they expect spiritual nurturing to take place there as well. So, they send their children to the church and encourage them to follow the church not only on Sunday, but anytime if the church has activities for the children. For example, Kachin churches often have scripture reading competitions, children's choir competitions, culture shows, etc. The parents trust the pastors, ministers and Sunday school teachers at the church as the spiritual leaders of both children and adults.

#### **4.1.2 Place for Fellowship**

Some of the participants view the church as a place for gathering together with friends, making fellowship, participating in various activities, sharing experiences, etc. They expect the church to help them improve their relational skills with others and to encourage them to learn more about Jesus Christ through fellowship, to develop a deep relationship with others. So, parents send their children to church to learn how to communicate with friends. Concerning this, one of my participants said the following,

*"Some children are learning from their friends about friendship with others. Our son is also having that kind of experience and he likes to play with his friends at school and at home as well. However, sometimes he is selfish and does not want to share his toys, food, etc. with others. He needs to learn how to maintain better relationships with others and how to be an example to others as well. So, we expect that he will improve his relationship skills by developing friendships with others at church".*

This parent talked about their child as an example. In fact, the parents have to know the habits and characteristics of their children and they have to guide them toward maturity in life in the right way according to God's will.

Like in the above case, some of the other participants are also expect the same thing from the church. They mention that, every Sunday, they participate in group activities in the church, like sports, fellowship with other churches, and sharing experiences or testimonies with each other after the church worship service. They enjoy attending church and expect to grow in their spiritual formation through fellowship with each other. At the same time, they also want their children to follow in their footsteps and so they encourage their children to do so. They do this by sending their children to church regularly and letting them participate in church activities, for example, Sunday school retreats for children, scripture memorization competitions, dramatic performances on special days such as Easter Sunday, Christmas, etc. One of the participants also said,

*"If they go to Sunday school, they will have friends and they will learn God's love through friendship with others and will build their spirituality through learning from the Sunday school teachers to become more Christlike and we believe that the church will lead the spiritual formation of our children. Our children also really enjoy going to Sunday school every week".*

It shows that the parents want their children to develop in spirituality through friendship with friends and their Sunday school teachers in the church.

The parent's perspectives show that the church members are the ones who have joy and peace through relationship and fellowship with each other. Just as they view the church as a place for fellowship, parents also want their children to view the church in the same way and they send them to church to learn something from this. They expect the children to transform their spirituality by fellowshiping with others. This includes not only fellowship with other believers, but also spiritual fellowship with Christ.

### 4.1.3 Providing an Opportunity to serve in Church

Some of the participants view the church as a place that provides opportunities to serve God. Thus, they expect their children to serve in church activities, such as playing piano, guitar or violin in church worship services. In fact, some of the participants mentioned their expectation that the church provide the children and youths with opportunities to learn such instruments as the piano, guitar, drum, violin, flute, etc. Their reasons for this are mostly similar: if the children can play well, they will play at church worship service, thus serving in church and thereby developing further understanding of the serving in godly ministry. This way, the children will grow up in the process of the church's teaching. Indeed, one of my participants, the pastor of his church, said that

*"As a pastor of the church I give chances to the children to participate by playing violin and piano in the church worship service. At first, the children will be happy to attend church because of the recognition they receive as church members, and secondly, at least they will know that serving in church is a way of serving God in their life. That is also one way of nurturing children to become more spiritually mature".*

Another couple who I interviewed also mentioned how they raised their daughter to serve God and people in church, and how, after graduating high school, she now serves in her church as a volunteer teacher in the church's education center. The participants also described how they appreciate their daughter's work, and how they encouraged her to serve at church.

According to these parents, they do not mention how to pray or how to live, but rather they nurture their children through their actions by serving in the church, and by serving people in their communities. And, it shows that the children's spiritual formation should be realized through actions incorporating the whole body, mind and spirit. So, the results show

that the parents' sending their children to church is not only for learning, but also to serve in the church.

## **4.2 Parents' Role in Nurturing the Children**

According to the data, the participants' understandings on nurturing the children are different and practice in different way in the family. The study yields three main themes 1) guidance 2) being example and 3) mentoring.

### **4.2.1 Guidance**

Even within twenty-three of my participants, there have different style of guidance for the children. And, they have different understanding about the term “guidance”. In this study, I will describe how my participants understand about guidance and what they do in practical life. At first, I would like to mention what they say about it. One of the participants said that

*"We understand that the parents must encourage the children not to stop learning. And, we usually buy the bible story books, movies like Samson, Moses, Abraham, etc. for them and let them read to give guideline for the children to know about God and to have faith. And then, we attend the parenting to know how to nurture the children. So, we know how to approach the children and teach the children to see God's purpose. And, we do night devotion regularly and used to review the sermon on Sunday night (the sermon from Sunday worship and Sunday school lessons and explain to them to understand more about the word of God especially that is on Sunday night devotion). Every night, we give a chance to the children to read the scripture, after that sing short worship song in Kachin and read daily bread in Kachin to understand more about God".*

This participant shows that to be guidance, parenting is very important in nurturing and family night devotion is also a part of spiritual guidance for the children. Some participants said that if the parents take care for the children's education, health,

housekeeping, and work for money and support to the children, and send the children to the church regularly, it is enough.

However, some of the participants understand that the children's spirituality is not enough by going Sunday school. And, the parents should be the spiritual leaders for the children at home like praying together before go to bed and sleep, read the scripture together and explain them. Moreover, some participants said that encouraging the children to study, to take care of health, teaching them to have good relationship with others also very important. And, the parents themselves also practice in daily life activities. It means that the children need to grow up both their physical and spiritual.

And, the children learn from their parents exactly. One of my participants also mentioned about that *"my children used to pray the same word as I pray and they used to respond to others as I do. As soon as I notice, I do the words that I use at home and in every daily activity, and I understand that the parents are automatically guidance for the children"*. The study shows that how much important the spiritual parenting at home, and to take time with the children to transform their spirituality because the children are learning through relationship with the parents.

Now a day, most of the parents and children do not stay together at home, because the parents are working out to support the family and they could not give time for the children. However, some parents are trying to be guidance for the children as much as they can. According to one of my participants, even though the parents and the children do not stay together, they encourage the children to go to Sunday school class with phone from distance because the children have to study hard in the learn center and stay there. So, the family schedule to meet together once a month about a few hours. However, some participants are practicing as guidance for the children by encouraging the children not to give up the life,

helping to understand God's will, listening the children's hearts and needs and sending to church to hear the word of God.

And, some of the participants are leading and showing themselves as spiritual guidance. Especially, on special Sunday like ester Sunday, Christmas, thanksgiving, etc. the parents and the children sit together in the church and listen the sermon together. And then, they talk together about the word of God that they heard from worship as review at home. This is how they do for the children as guidance at home, at church and at society.

#### **4.2.2 Life Example**

Parenting is not enough just guiding how to do or live, but still need to be the example for the children. In fact, I will describe how my participants said in this study. One of my participants mentioned about their family life that to be the example for the children is not easy in practical because sometime they could not show love even they love their children and sometime teach with anger. Besides, they do not have regular devotional at home except praying for the food. And, in the church also they are hardly participate in Church activities. So, the children do not listen when they tell to go Sunday school and feel guilty before God. And, another participant also said that,

*"To be example of the children, the parents themselves have to involve in every activities at home, school, church, etc. My understanding about being example is shaping the children as we want them, for example, the doctor's children are not hard to be the doctor and the teacher's children become teachers because these parents are the example of these children. The children are looking their parents what they are doing and acting, then they learn from the parents. So, this is not just only teaching to the children, but to work together with children. It is in the process of life. If we, the parents, want the children to know God, the parents have to introduce about God and have to tell what God wants every day like doing night devotion every night. Why night devotion is so important. As a Christian, the children should know how to pray at least, and should know the grace of God. In*

*fact, this is good opportunity to show example to the children. As a Christian parent, we always try to be example for the children like involving in church activities like singing choir, leading the church worship, etc. so that the children may learn something from us, and encourage the children to do like us for example, reading the scripture verses, praying, leading worship song in junior church worship service something like that".*

Some participants are also practicing on that way. This method shows that the parents are teaching to the children God is the only one who gives the wisdom and knowledge. And, they expect the children to experience God's greatness in their life. And, they are helping the children to understand about God and introduce God to their children.

And, some parents are really willing to be the example of the children and they try to practice in real. And they search the way how to do and they communicate with the pastors of the church or ministers and Sunday school teachers to support them like attending the church and inviting the pastors to their home, etc. One of the participants said that, *"Once a year, we used to call the pastors and other relatives to give thanks God, so that the children may know about thanksgiving and understand the meaning of God's grace. And, we often say that God is good all the time in front of our children"*. This participant shows that even though they are not good enough to be the example for the children, they try as much as they can. And, they do Christ center in the family and they do care the children's spirituality.

### **4.2.3 Spiritual Supporting**

When people say about supporting, most of us might see the needs of children's physical essential supporting like providing money, health care, study, something like that. However, the Christian parents always must consider the children's spiritual supporting too. Concerning about this, one of my participants said that

*"We always say to the children to pray to God alone every day, everywhere because we believe that God can do everything by praying, and God is the only one who gave wisdom and knowledge. So, whenever we talk with the children, we always mention how God is working in our family and supporting to us, and teach them how to pray and encourage them to pray. And, when the children attend Sunday school class, sometime we also sitting behind all the children and listen together and participate with them".*

Here, this participant is supporting the children to feel joy at church and participate together with the children to be comfort in the heart of the children. It is very important for the children for their spiritual formation.

Another participant also mentioned that the parents have responsibility to support the children's spiritual growth from their young ages. And, they said that "we teach the children, at first, to obey the word of God because we understand that the blessing comes through obedience. And second, teach about hope for the future and third is about grace of God. As a Christian, the children also need to know about these things. So, we send them to church to do spiritual exercise as they learn from the parents, the pastors and Sunday school teachers. We can only support on this way for our children's spirituality". According to this participant, they are supporting not only the spiritual understanding, but also they are shaping their spiritual with the pastors and Sunday school teachers as spiritual discipline.

Moreover, some of the participants are nurturing their children spirituality through culture and tradition. In the church, every summer holidays, the church leaders and committee open Kachin language teaching class and music theory and sight singing and other musical instrumental teaching classes as church summer school. And, the parents send their children to that summer school. In that summer school, the children have to learn Kachin alphabet, vocabulary, and how to read the sentence like Kachin cartoon books about Jesus and the characters from the bible and Kachin poem; and other musical instrumental learning. In fact, one of my participants said that



*"The summer school is very important for our Kachin Society because the government school do not teach about Kachin, the Bible and God. So, we send our children every year to learn more about our identity (Kachin, Christian), and to be mature in Spiritual"*

Through interviews, the participants are describing that Kachin people's spiritual formation cannot far away with the culture. And, the parents are expecting the church will help or support the children in nurturing spirituality and they also involve in that supportiveness. According to the participants, they believe that if the church and the parents work together in nurturing the children spiritually, the children's spirituality will grow up. In fact, there will be mention how the participants are nurturing as they believe and they expect on their children spiritually.

### **4.3 Parents' Spiritual Approach of Nurturing**

According to the data, the spiritual life of the parents depends on what they are doing, and how they see God, what they are expecting in their life, and their teaching methods and nurturing the children also become different. In the following paragraphs, I will describe my participants' spiritual understanding and practice in nurturing their children.

#### **4.3.1 Nurturing through Praying**

Within the participants, there has different understanding about submission. Most of the parents they believe that the children are the blessing from God, and believe in Biblical tradition. Jan. One of the participants said that

*"I understand that first born baby is for God. So, when the baby was born, we prayed God to use our baby in His ministry, and we expected our baby to understand the will of God and to serve God. And, I always tell my first child to serve God. However, we never stopped praying for the children and keep praying*

*for their future life. We believe that praying is the big weapon of life to overcome from suffering, temptation, etc."*

This participant shows that praying is also very important in nurturing the children spirituality. And, the parents must have faith in God to shape the children's life as His will.

And, some of the participants also mention the same thing about praying. And they are willing first born baby to be pastor who takes care of the humans' spirituality. One of the participants said that "my child was in the hospital because of malaria about one week, but she still needs medical treatment. So we, father and mother, prayed together to get well soon in prayer room at home. Besides, we ask the pastor of the church to pray for our child. After one week, the doctor said that we can go back to home. From that time, our child never got sick with malaria. And, we often tell her not to forget God's healing upon her. We believe that God answer our prayer. So, we expect our children to be faithful in God alone and to grow up their spirituality through faith by praying". In fact, we can see this parent is transferring their faith to their children and they discipline them to follow as they believe God.

Moreover, another participant also mentioned that when she feel tired or struggling for the children and for the whole family, she used to go to the church's prayer room and meditate at least one hour and take time with God. And one of my participant also mentioned that she used to sing praising song and give thanks to God if she feel bless. Even in trouble time, tired or have problem, she used to sing gospel songs and say aloud the scripture by heart. So, this interviews shows that different participants practice different methods for their spiritual nurturing their children.

### **4.3.2 Ongoing Process of Nurturing**

Most of the participants' understand about spiritual practices for spiritual growth are praying and reading the bible, and memorizing the scriptures. According to the interviews, not many participants share testimony to the children at home or to others. They primarily stress on teach the children to be humble, patient, kind, help, etc. and to listen parents as the parents has authority to teach from God, to forgive others as God forgive us, to respect each other as human beings are the images of God. One of the participants said that *"actually I am willing to share my own testimony to others and to my children, but I never do that"*. It shows that this participant do not have experience sharing testimony even they want to.

However, one of the participants is different from others and said that *"the more I testify, the more I am blessed from God. I always share my testimony to others. So, I used to teach my children also to share testimony to others to be blessed and to be eyewitness of Christ"*. This parent knows the process of nurturing the children spirituality. They do it and they train as they do to their children. As nurturing the children is a process, the parents' life also in a process to walk with the children together in the whole of life.

However, some participants mentioned that they never do family devotion, but used to tell the children to pray before sleep to give thanks God for that He had done for us and before having food. As a parent, they do pray for the children wherever they go, whatever they do. And, they said that even they could not nurture well in spiritual, they will guide and show the way to be mature spirituality like encouraging studying bible, going church, supporting to participate in spiritual activities, etc.

### **4.3.3 Parents' Overview on Spiritual Life**

Every participant mentioned that they believe in Jesus Christ as their savior, the way, the truth and the light. And, they agree the church's teaching and follow the church, and

support the church by attending the church worship, offering, encouraging doing evangelism to non-believers. Some of the participants' view that the church is the only one who transforms spirituality; however, some view that the church has responsibility to shape the spirituality of the church members, but the family itself also has responsibility to nurture the children spiritually.

And, some of my participants said that the parents needs listen the children's heart with love, patient and kindness, so that the children may see God through the parents and they may experience the spiritual formation in their life. Some mentioned in this study that they never beat the children in nurturing through learning from the books and attending the parenting. In fact, some participants do not agree with that. They said that as a Christian, the parents have to nurture the children as the bible said. So, if the children do not listen the parent, the parents must teach and guide them with the authority from God to obey parents and the words of God. At the same time, both parents must be harmony in nurturing the children's spiritual formation.

It shows that Kachin Christian parents are willing in nurturing the children spirituality even they are not perfect in nurturing. They support the children in different way because they have different background like education, financial, jobs, etc. However, they are still going in the process of the children's spirituality and they involve in it. And, they share it to others to be witness of Christ. Their nurturing goal of the children is each child's spirituality must transform to be Christlikeness and to be mature in spiritual life, and to pass on to their next generation too.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Conclusion**

As the study has been described in Chapter four, the readers may see how the participants view upon nurturing the children' spirituality. Here, this chapter is the last chapter of the study and the study will conclude with the overview of the study and will provide the implications of the research results how the participants were nurturing the children spiritually in practical life as the data based on Kachin Christian parents from Myitkyina, Kachin State, Myanmar, and then there will be conclusion of the study.

#### **5.1 Overviews of the study**

According to the study, most of the participants teach the children to believe in Jesus Christ alone as the savior and teach to be Christlikeness and encourage the children to have faith and to be witness of Christ among non-believers, and help them to understand more about God, Holy Spirit and the Son Jesus Christ by telling the story, reading the scripture, and listening the sermon from the pastor. Then, they listen to the children and they are trying to build healthy relationship with the children in Jesus Christ.

Moreover, some participants mention that the children also have to learn education not only from the University, but also have to learn Biblical education / Christian education from the church or from the seminary. Only a few of them mentioned that education is just to get good job for better life, but they do not mean that Jesus Christ is not important in their life. Every participant mentioned about praying through faith, and they believe that nothing is impossible through faith in Jesus Christ.

And, they often tell not forget praying to God at home, and send the children to the church Sunday school to learn the word of God and encourage them to participate in the activities of the church, because they trust that the church is the only one who teach the word of God and guide the spirituality of the church members. Some participants mentioned that they worry for the children's spirituality because they do not have time to teach the children and they are struggling with works for money to support the family. For them, the church is the only place for nurturing the children's spirituality and they are expecting the church to teach everything that the children needs in spiritual.

## **5.2 Implications**

According to the participants, they want to nurture the children spiritually. However, some participants really do not know what ought to be as a Christian parents. And, they are nurturing as they understand and know. So, what ought to be? For this question, the simple answer will be as first; the parents ought to believe Jesus Christ as the savior, redeemer, and creator, second; the parents ought to show love of God to the children, and third; the parents ought to be patient, because nurturing the children spiritually is the long term process. These answers came out from the results of the participants' interviews.

These answers might very simple, but it is very important to the Christian parents and necessary. According to the research results, the study would like to provide some suggestions for the Kachin Christian parents to develop in nurturing the children spiritually as

1. The parents must learn the bible insight to teach the children and to support in nurturing the children's spirituality.
2. The parents have to know that what is going on in this process, and ought to interest to the children's single activities, so that the parents will know how much the children are going on and improve.

3. The parents should not forget to go with the pastors of the church, ministers and Sunday school teachers in nurturing the children spiritually like inviting the pastors and Sunday school teachers of the children to pray for the children's education, health at home and to give special sermon for the children, giving time the pastors and the children' Sunday school teachers to talk with the children about the spiritual life.

According to the participants, some of them are applying and practicing in the traditional way because they know that the origin of Kachin children learning style is through listening. So, they push themselves to talk with the children and spend time with the children. However, some of them believe that the church is first priority to grow up the children's spirituality, and the parents are the second. It shows that the church have to prepare much among Kachin community for the children's spiritual life.

In fact, what the church should prepare for them? The study would suggest on nurturing the children spiritually to the church, pastors, ministers, Sunday school teachers and the missionary who are working among Kachin community as four main points.

1. The peoples who are working for the Kachin Christian community should prepare deeply in Sunday school, junior Bible study camp, children's one/two week spiritual work camp, learning center for the children include handicraft, and so on.
2. The church should not forget the parents' spiritual formation as well in nurturing the children spiritually.
3. The parents also have to learn parenting training in the church, attend women (mothers) spiritual training, men (fathers) spiritual training, and bible study class to build up the children's spirituality.

4. The pastors, ministers also needs to visits to the church members and, pray for them for their spiritual and encourage them to nurture the children with the Love of God to grow up their spirituality.

If the parents and the church work together in nurturing the children's spirituality, the future's generation's spiritual life also will be mature and will be save in Christ as Jesus Christ is our Lord savior eternity. And, the parents and the children's spiritual formation will grow up in the process and there will be more Christlikeness.

### 5.3 Conclusion

As a conclusion of the study, I would like to share a quote from K. L. Oliver, which he said in his book *Passing It On: How to nurture your Children's faith Season by Season* that "parents usually ask how the children slept, what is happening at school that day, how the day was and tuck them in at night". Daily check-ins like 'sad, glad, and sorry' reminds us to listen to our children with God's ears and see them through God's eyes. But, he suggested that "actually, the parents must simply ask God to give eyes of grace and ears of love, and offer your child your undivided attention every day. The goal is to talk, listen, pray and remember the daily prayers and practices together".<sup>45</sup> I believe that all the Christian parents can do these simple things for the children's spirituality.

On the other hand, to understand the importance of nurturing children spiritually, parents must realize that God is helping in this process and working together with them. Also, if God is our focus, He promises us that He will provide for our every need, but we must know that this is not a promise to fulfill our every desire. This study has shown us through the participants, and also through the words and ideas of other authors that we must not lose focus upon our Lord, our provider, our guide, the Lord Jesus Christ.

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<sup>45</sup> Kara Lassen Oliver *"Passing It On: How to nurture your Children's faith Season by Season"* (Kindle location 242-254) Copyright © 2015 Kindle Edition.



In the Christian life, spiritual formation is very important for every single person. Thus, it is something we should all be aware of ourselves, and not only that, but we should also be explaining it to the next generation. Even so, Kachin parents also have to understand that only God knows how He will bless future generations. However, one thing is certain. The generation which will be impacted the most by their parents service to God is the next generation growing up at home. This way, the children will also mature into mighty servants for the Lord. Finally, I would like to encourage and suggest to all Kachin Christian parents and to the leaders of the churches, ministers and Sunday school teachers: with this in mind, let us commit to stand firm in the faith and to strive to continually mature, to be more Christlikeness and let us offer this to the next generation of Kachins by nurturing them spirituality.

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### **Human Resources:**

Interview: Twenty-three participants

## **APPENDIX A QUESTIONNAIRE**

1. Personal Information  
What is your name (husband and wife)?  
What is your job?  
How many children do you have?
  
2. Location Information  
City?  
Church?
  
3. How do you understand the spiritual nurturing?
  
  
4. What do you expect from the church in nurturing the children spirituality?
  
  
5. When do you send the children to church normally and why?
  
  
6. What do you do for the children's spirituality at home?
  
  
7. How do you support the children for their spiritual formation?
  
  
8. Do you think you should learn Christian parenting for your children?

## **APPENDIX B OBSERVATION NOTE FORM**

Time of Interview:

Date:

Address:

Participant:

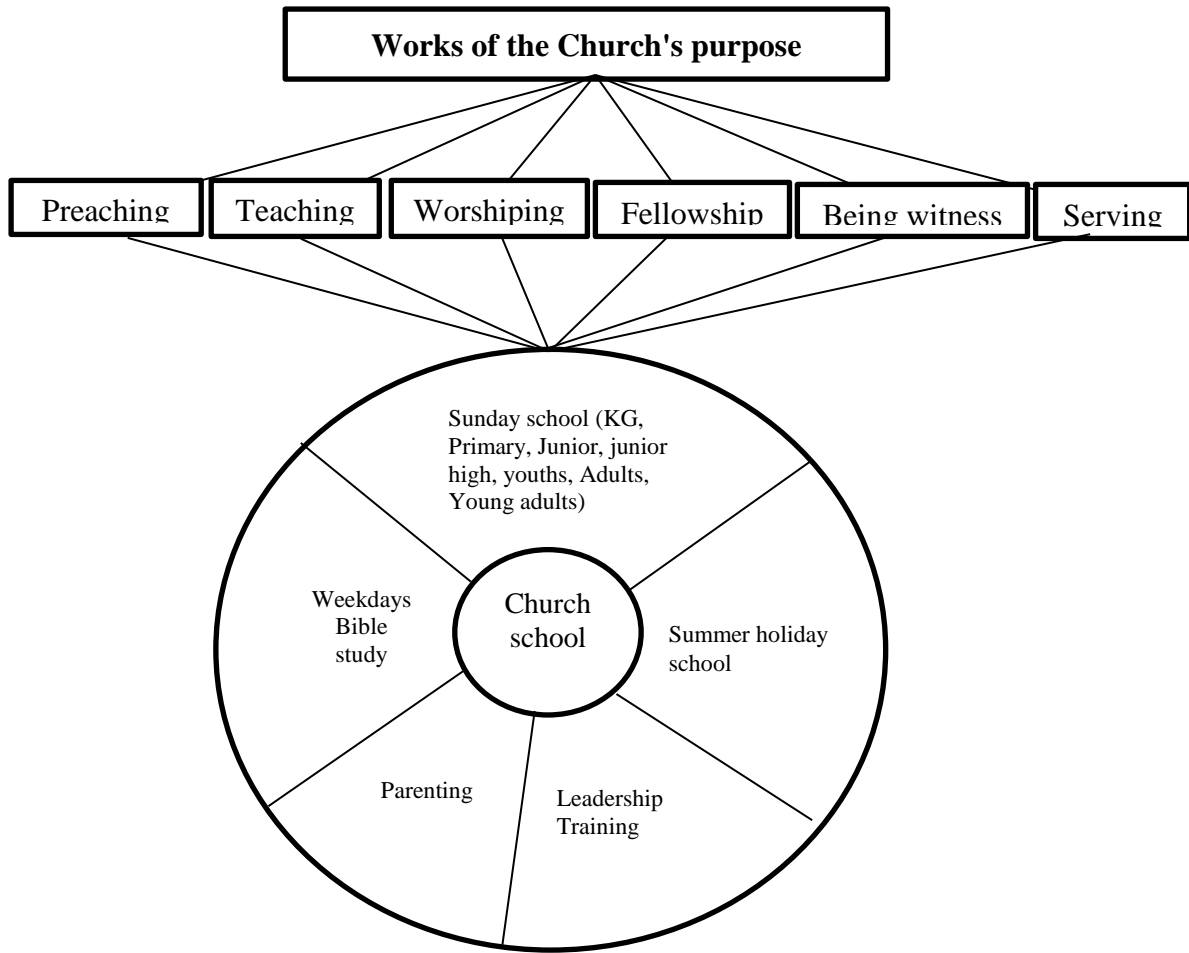
Listing Observation Notes as,

1) Interaction with others

2) Responds on the questions

3) Circumstances

**Picture.1**



## **RESUME**

Name: Labya Khun San

Date of Birth: 2<sup>nd</sup> January, 1988

Place of Birth: Myanmar

Institutions Attended: 2016, Master of Arts in Christian Theology / Master of Divinity,  
McGilvary College of Divinity, Payap University, Chiang Mai,  
Thailand.

2010, Bachelor of Theology, Kachin Theological College and Seminary,  
Nawng Nang, Myitkyina, Myanmar.