

Taylor University

Pillars at Taylor University

Christian Ministries Senior Capstone

Christian Ministries Program

5-2023

Equipping and Mobilizing Parents and Guardians of Middle Schoolers to Disciple their Children Through the Ministry of Parents of Middle Schoolers (POMS)

Mary Kate Hipp

Follow this and additional works at: <https://pillars.taylor.edu/christian-ministries-senior-capstone>



Part of the [Christianity Commons](#), and the [Religious Education Commons](#)

Equipping and Mobilizing Parents and Guardians of Middle Schoolers to Disciple their Children
Through the Ministry of *Parents of Middle Schoolers (POMS)*

Mary Kate Hipp
CMI 421 – Philosophy and Strategy of Christian Ministry
Rev. Dr. Hank Voss
9 May 2023

To the Lord, my Deliverer
and to my parents, my encouragers.

Table of Contents

<i>Abstract</i>	5
<i>Introduction: The House We Are Building</i>	6
Introduction	6
Ministry Purpose and Need	7
Ministry Context	9
Frankena Model	10
Introducing Chris and Lori	11
Personal Interest	12
Conclusion	14
<i>Box A: A Purpose Driven House</i>	15
Introduction	15
Biblical Directives	16
Knowledge of God	17
To Be Ultimately His	18
Ends of Knowledge of God	18
POMS Ultimate Purpose for Chris and Lori	19
Conclusion	20
<i>Box B: Clearing the Worksite</i>	22
Introduction	22
Theological Premises	22
The Nature of God: God is personal and desires relationship with His people.	22
The Nature of Scripture: Scripture is the inspired, authoritative Word of God that leads us into relationship with Him.	24
The Nature of the Church: Equipping the laity for ministry is a central task of church leaders.	25
Anthropological Premises	27
The Nature of People: People are created in the image of God which means they were created for relationships.....	27
The Nature of Family: The family plays a vital role in faith development.	28
Conclusion	29
<i>Box C: Reading the Blueprint</i>	31
Introduction	31
Communion	31

Compassion.....	34
Commitment.....	35
Competency	36
Confidence.....	37
Conclusion	38
<i>Box D: Picking the Materials</i>	39
Introduction.....	39
Adult Learning Theory	41
Social Learning Theory.....	43
Holy Spirit	46
Conclusion	47
<i>Box E: Raising the Roof</i>	48
Introduction.....	48
Practice 1: Buddying.....	50
Practice 2: Understanding	51
Practice 3: Implementing	53
Practice 4: Leading.....	54
Practice 5: Developing.....	55
Conclusion	56
<i>Conclusion: The House We Built</i>	57
<i>Bibliography</i>	58

Abstract

Parents within the church are facing a pandemic of feelings of inadequacy in terms of discipling their teens. Modern culture has largely shifted responsibilities away from parents and onto professionals at church, for developing the spiritual dimension of their adolescent. Yet, the familial influence of an adolescent supersedes the influence of any youth worker. Youth workers should neither be the foundation of an adolescent's spirituality nor the cosmetic finishing. In a Christian home, parents and guardians have the high privilege to influence and lead the spiritual formation of their children. The church was granted the high privilege and honor to equip the saints so that the body of Christ may be build up (Eph 4:11-12). A relationship between families and the church in the role of spiritual formation is essential. This philosophy of ministry proposes a ministry that equips parents to practice the ministry of discipleship at home.

KEY WORDS: Family Ministry, Church Ministry, Church work with Families, Parent Ministry, Parenting, Discipleship, Spiritual Formation, Middle School Ministry, Youth Ministry

Introduction: The House We Build with God

Introduction

Imagine passing through a bustling city with dazzling buildings, hip restaurants, successful businesses, and trendy parks, yet no houses. There are no places of residence, nowhere to live, to raise a family. There are plenty of places to work and play but few places to grow. Now imagine spotting a plot of land in this city—it practically screams “build a house here, build a house here.” So, we build a house. This can be like the church—dazzling facilities, hip coffee shops in lobbies, successful Sunday services, and trendy music, but no discipleship in the home. There is a space in the church for family ministry that shouts, “build a house here, build a house here.” So, we build a house. We build a house where parents will disciple their children and generations will be changed.

Parents and guardians have the high privilege to radically shape the spiritual formation of their children. The church also was granted the high privilege and honor to equip the saints so that the body of Christ may be build up (Eph 4:11-12).¹ A relationship between families and the church in the role of spiritual formation is evident and essential. The famous *shema* prayer, a part of Moses’ instructions to the Israelites which Jews and Christians alike have been praying for centuries, compels parents to impress the truth and centrality of God on their children.² Parents and guardians are entrusted with and should be equipped for the task of spiritual formation amongst their children.

¹ All Scripture references are abbreviated and of the ESV translation unless otherwise noted.

² Deuteronomy 6:4-9

The familial influence of an adolescent supersedes the influence of any youth worker.³ Youth workers should neither be the foundation of a middle schooler's spirituality nor the cosmetic finishing. Yet, there seems to be a parental pandemic of feelings of inadequacy among parents of middle schoolers. This problem is emphasized in a generation of adolescents of ever evolving trends, information, and knowledge. Parents are entering uncharted territory as their children emerge into adolescence. If parents inevitably play a foundational part of the spiritual formation of adolescents, why exclude them from the equation? Why throw all the weight on the youth worker? Why not include them in the spiritual development of their middle schooler? In fact, including them would not suffice, they must become partners with the ministry, and be equipped and resourced to disciple their children. This paper serves as a philosophy of ministry which equips and mobilizes parents and guardians of middle schoolers to be catalysts in the spiritual formation of their middle schoolers.

This introductory section serves to express the relevant concerns and need for such a ministry. It provides a brief description of what such a ministry might look like practically, as well as the cultural context of said middle schoolers and parents. Furthermore, a set of fictitious parents who are a part of this proposed ministry will be introduced to the reader, guiding the reader through the various sections of the paper. It then expresses the primary reasons for my interest in developing research on such a ministry before describing the Frankena Model, which will be used to develop this ministry for parents of middle schoolers.

Ministry Purpose and Need

Regarding the spiritual formation of adolescents, it is imperative that they have at least five spiritually significant "other adult persons" besides parents in their life to walk alongside

³ Richard Dunn and Mark Senter II, *Reaching a Generation for Christ: A Comprehensive Guide to Youth Ministry*, Second (Moody Press, 1997), 29.

them.⁴ However, spiritual formation begins domestically. Although we hear snide remarks from adolescents embarrassed by the mere presence of their parents, the most influential person(s) in an adolescent's life remains their parents or guardians. According to Christian Smith, professor of sociology at Notre Dame, the most important pastor to teenagers is their parents.⁵ In a world overwhelmed by peer pressure, media influence, and targeted ads, one could assume that parents of all people in the lives of middle schoolers have little to no influence.⁶ However, research conclusively reveals that parental figures are *the* most influential being in the lives of teenagers.⁷

As parent-school partnerships are reinforced through parent-teacher conferences, notes home, meet the teacher nights, John Hattie discovered one of the greatest and most influential effects on a student's performance is their parents' involvement or disinvolvement in their education.⁸ If this is true of schoolhouse education, why would this not be true of Christian education? Scripture describes two desires God has for families: to be in relationship with one another and to prioritize Him.⁹ These crucial relationships within families and between families and God require the parents to seek these essential relationships out, to lead their children to a spiritually formed life. This proposed ministry for parents or guardians is vital for the shaping of the family-congregation partnership.

⁴ Severe Mike, "Axioms of Youth Ministry" (Ministry to Youth, Taylor University, 2021).

⁵ Mark Oestreicher and Scott Rubin, *Middle School Ministry: A Comprehensive Guide to Working with Early Adolescents* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 309.

⁶ Oestreicher and Rubin, 308.

⁷ Vanessa A. Flores, "Family Fuel: The Church Partnering with PArents in the Spiritual Formation of Children and Family," *Selected Honors Theses* 113 (2020).

⁸ John Hattie, *Visible Learning for Teachers: Maximizing Impact on Learning* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2012), 57.

⁹ Merton P. Strommen and Richard A. Hardel, *Passing on the Faith: A Radical New Model For Youth and Family Ministry* (Winona, MN: Youth and Family Institute of Augsburg College, 2000), 16.

Ministry Context

This paper describes a ministry which targets the parents and guardians of middle schoolers in a large, diverse, Lutheran church in affluent central Ohio. This parental ministry will be integrated into the context of a large church in an affluent suburban setting in Columbus, Ohio. This church, Upper Arlington Lutheran Church (UALC) has a long-standing reputation in the greater Columbus area for its exemplar youth ministry. UALC is functioning in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, working to rebuild their family and youth ministry programs. This congregation is invested and supportive of the church both financially and personally. There are a plethora of ministries and missions in place for each age group, but little which would invite whole family participation. UALC's vision is to be an "oasis of his kingdom for a dry and thirst world. [They] envision a future where [they] are so well-watered in the love and truth and Spirit of Christ that it transforms [their] life together..."¹⁰

This ministry, *Parents of Middle Schoolers (POMS)*, will include practical conversations, workshops, teachings, and practices to invite domestic spiritual formation with the church as partner. The vision of *POMS* is to equip parents and guardians to lead their children at home. *POMS* will function as an eight-week course which follows four steps towards mobilization through the acronym BUILD:

1. **Building Friendships:** Mentors model parents' ways of discipleship.
2. **Understanding:** Parents and mentors work together to practice discipleship methods.
3. **Implementing:** Parents apply what they have learned to case studies.
4. **Leading:** Parents lead their students in what they have learned through an immersive discipleship experience.

¹⁰ "About UALC: Oasis," UALC, 2023, <https://www.ualc.org/about>.

5. **Developing:** Upon completion of the program, participants receive quarterly resources for continued discipleship-development via email.¹¹

Within these eight weeks, the parent will implicitly be discipled and out of their overflow they will be equipped to disciple their families. The aim of this ministry is to provide parents with practical information about their adolescents and their development, engage them in conversation about hot button topics their children are facing, and to meet them and walk alongside them with the love of God.

Frankena Model

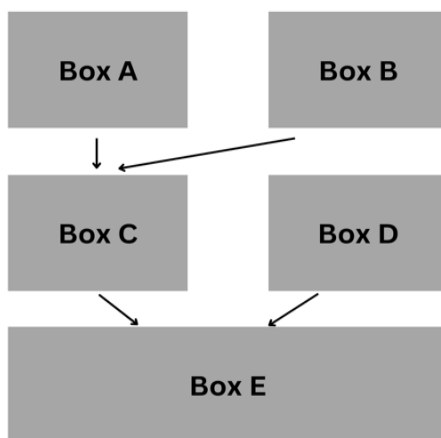


Figure 1: Frankena Model

The Frankena Model will be used to develop the philosophy of this ministry for parents of middle schoolers throughout the paper. The Frankena Model was created by the American philosopher William Frankena.¹² This model for developing and organizing a philosophy of ministry is best described by Figure 1. It is comprised of five parts in the form of boxes that seek to answer the ‘why’ and ‘how’ of this

ministry:

1. **Box A:** States the ultimate end of the ministry—how things ought to be. What is biblically consistent? Why is this ministry needed?

¹¹ Merton P. Strommen and Richard A. Hardel, *Passing on the Faith: A Radical New Model For Youth and Family Ministry* (Winona, MN: Youth and Family Institute of Augsburg College, 2000), 52.

¹² Darwin K Glassford, “Philosophy of Ministry,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Christian Education*, ed. Michael Anthony (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2001), 302.

2. Box B: Lists the specific beliefs which inform the ends of the ministry. What is believed about life? These are rooted in Scripture and expound upon Box A.
3. Box C: States the excellencies, or attributes, the product of such a ministry will possess.
4. Box D: Explains the theories which will be used in the ministry. Answers what theories will lead to achieve the desired outcomes.
5. Box E: Defines explicitly what will programmatically occur at the ministry. Answers how this ministry will run.

The methodology of ministry is informed by the philosophy of ministry. The careful examination and collaboration of each box thoughtfully considers the ins and outs of a Christian ministry. According to DeVries, a youth ministry scholar, the way in which a ministry is running is the way in which a ministry was planned.¹³ If a ministry is planned based off of method alone, namely programs, and there is little spiritual development in mind or thought behind the process, the results will yield just that: programs with no spiritual formation. On the other hand, a ministry which has intentionally thought about the philosophy of ministry: the need, the desired outcome, the psychological and sociological state of the participants, and the methods which are most conducive to achieving the desired outcome; the results will yield programs with spiritual formation.

Introducing Chris and Lori

This paper follows a fictitious set of parents, Chris and Lori. In each phase of this paper, Chris and Lori will experience different aspects of the ministry and engage with its implications. Chris and Lori are Caucasian, in their mid-forties, and are the parents of their only child, Nora, a seventh grader as a local public middle school. Both attended a Christian university for their

¹³ Mark DeVries, *Sustainable Youth Ministry: Why Most Youth Ministry Doesn't Last and What Your Church Can Do About It* (IVP Books, 2008), 140.

undergraduate degrees and consider faith to be one of the most important aspects of their lives. They are affluent residents of central Ohio, frequent attendants of UALC and are highly invested in the life of their sweet Nora. They are often first to volunteer their resources for various ministries at church. They urge Nora to attend as many youth events as possible and desire for her to be connected.

According to Erik Erikson, Chris and Lori are in the seventh stage of development which is generativity versus stagnation.¹⁴ This stage of development is characterized by the desire to give to others. For example, raising children and contributing to their holistic formation. Those in stage seven such as Chris and Lori strive to be productive and to make an impact on their surroundings. This would categorize Chris and Lori's state well. Spiritually, Chris and Lori are seeking to transition from a point of spiritual stagnancy to a faith which flourishes—how can their faith be effective. Particularly they want to invest more into the church and their child. Though they desire a close relationship with Nora, they are rather busy as Chris' job is rather time consuming and involves extensive traveling. When they have the time to be with Nora, faith seems to slip from the conversation.

Personal Interest

I recall a time when I was in late elementary school or early middle school and as my family sat around the dinner table, they asked their predictable “how was your day?” question. This day I was burning to ask a question based off the Vacation Bible School lesson I had heard earlier that day: “Dad, if Jesus asked you to cook for 5,000 people but you only had five loaves of bread and two fish, what would you do?” My father, who was clearly taken aback by such a question, set down his fork and knife, smiled softly and said, “I would do it, because Jesus told

¹⁴ Duffy Robbins, *This Way to Youth Ministry: An Introduction to the Adventure* (Harper Collins, 2004), 201.

me to. He will make a way.” Little did I know at eleven years old; this would ignite a passion within me for parents and children to spur one another on in faith and for parents to be equipped to disciple their children with the church as their support. How could the church come alongside parents to model the way of discipleship and how to foster frequent conversations about the Gospel.

My interest in this a ministry was ignited once again by my personal proximity to parents of middle schoolers at a recent internship I held. I had many conversations with parents as well as seasoned youth ministers who attested to the need for a partnership with parents. Clearly there was a pertinent connection between parents and youth staff in the formation and navigation of spiritual formation in the lives of middle schoolers. Many of the parents I met with expressed their feelings as though they are grasping at straws to connect with their children—if they could get their children to talk to them at all, that is. Parents and guardians are desperate to know their children, to know that what their children are experiencing is normal, to know that they have not messed up their children. However, I, as a twenty some year-old need guidance in ministering to parents’ children as well. Although I am equipped with a degree in discipling adolescents, have a host of classes on adolescent psychology under my belt, and many experiences with middle schoolers, I am not a parent. I do not have parental expertise. Parents and youth ministers must work in tandem for their children to be holistically disciplined. One cannot say to the other “I do not need you” (1 Corinthians 12:21).

If ever I become the center and the sole provider of spiritual formation and discipleship of a youth ministry, I have gone wrong. In my finitude, I cannot juggle all the plates a youth ministry demands. If I hold all the plates, there is now no room for error and some things, maybe the spiritual formation of students, may inevitably fall and break. Now, if I delegate the spinning

of the plates across a wealth of volunteers and families to share the weight, the plates may be spun to the best of their ability, and the likelihood of breaking a metaphorical plate decreases.¹⁵ In this way, it is not, nor should it ever be my sole responsibility to balance the plates of the spiritual formation of all my students—choosing to partner with their parents who intimately know their child is not only helpful but is essential. To use the language of Kara Powell and Chap Clark, a “sticky faith” in adolescents begins with and requires a healthy, positive, active relationship between child and parent or guardian and parents or guardians in the fellowship of the church and Jesus Christ.¹⁶

Conclusion

Church partnership between parents and guardians and children is critical for the spiritual formation of adolescents. Scripture calls for the domestic church to take action, it is the responsibility of the church to walk alongside parents and guardians in this venture. *POMS* ministry is essential for the longevity of spiritual formation amongst middle schoolers. This paper, through means of the Frankena Model, and following the fictitious characters Chris and Lori, will establish a philosophy of ministry for *POMS* for the glory of the Lord and the flourishing of His people.

¹⁵ DeVries, *Sustainable Youth Ministry: Why Most Youth Ministry Doesn't Last and What Your Church Can Do About It*, 142.

¹⁶ Dean Borgman, *Foundations for Youth Ministry: Theological Engagement with Teen Life and Culture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 130.

Box A: A Purpose Driven House

Introduction

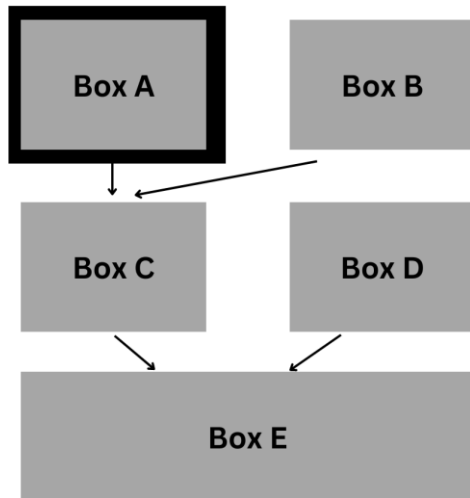


Figure 2: Frankena Model, Box A

Imagine being hired onto a construction crew, there is great excitement for building, the plot of land seems promising, there are plenty of people willing to serve on the crew, but no one knows what they are building. There is no purpose. Everyone on the crew was hired to ‘build’ but there is no purpose in mind—just mindless hammering. Imagine building a ministry with no purpose in mind. It would have the same effect as this metaphorical mindless

hammering. Sure, the construction crew is building, but what is the purpose for their hammering? Psalm 127:1 states that “Unless the Lord builds the house, the workers labor in vain.” The workers of *POMS* shall not labor in vain, there must be a purpose from the Lord.

The following section outlines and defines the Frankena Model Box A of this philosophy of ministry as shown in Figure 2. The Word of God clearly expresses the way in which the world ought to live through God’s directives. Box A in philosopher William Frankena’s model for Christian education works to identify such ideals. What is the ultimate purpose of humanity according to Scripture? What is the fundamental truth this philosophy of ministry believes? Within the context of a philosophy of ministry, what are the long-range goals of Christian education? This section identifies and supports answers to each of these questions through the Frankena Model of Box A. The examination and explanation of the ultimate purpose of humanity from a biblical perspective, synonymously defines the ultimate purpose of *POMS*.

The ultimate purpose for humanity is to know God. Truly, the purpose of theological study is knowing God.¹⁷ Knowing God leads to loving God which leads to obeying God which leads to knowing God which leads to so on and so forth. Knowing, loving, and obeying God asserts a relationship with God. A.W Pink affirms the necessity of knowing God by stating that “an unknown God can never be trusted, served, nor worshipped.” To know God and henceforth be in relationship with God precedes the Westminster Catechism’s assertion that the chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. The glorification and enjoyment of God is an anticipated result of the knowledge of God. It must be made known that this knowledge of God is not a conglomeration of esoteric or asinine facts and theological presuppositions, but a deep, personal, profound, knowledge of God. Having and developing a knowledge of God is, “more than merely a body of truths about God...we know the living and personal God. The task of knowing, God, then, does not focus on the possession of a list of statements about God, but on the enjoyment of fellowship with God.”¹⁸

Biblical Directives

Scripture clearly calls all to know God. The chorus the Lord presents throughout the Pentateuchal account is “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt.” Often upon the instructions or actions of the Lord, He proclaims that they were for the purpose of the Israelites or their enemies to know that He is Lord. In the first lament of the Lord in the account of Hosea the prophet, He declares that He desires not burnt offerings but the knowledge of God (Hosea 6:6b). The people of Israel had come to live as though they had never known God; living in ignorance of His love for them. The Lord frequently reminded the Israelites that

¹⁷ Richard Dunn and Mark Senter II, *Reaching a Generation for Christ: A Comprehensive Guide to Youth Ministry*, Second (Moody Press, 1997), 47.

¹⁸ Stephen J Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994), 49.

He was the Lord who brought them out of Egypt so they might have a relationship with Him. The Israelites knew lots about the Egyptian gods and quickly turned to them in their desperation. Therefore, the Lord reminded His people of His name and His deliverance of them so that they may turn to Him and know Him in their desperation. What good is it to follow the Lord and forget His love? What good is it to blindly follow the Lord and present Him burnt offerings yet know not of Him? Knowing God is imperative to having a genuine relationship with Him.

In the New Testament, both the epistles and the Gospel accounts declare that to know God means to know Christ, or to be united with Christ.”¹⁹ John 17:3 states that eternal life is to know the only true God. Knowing God is believing in His Word and accepting it, giving those who do so the right to become children of God (John 1:12). If we know not God, we are not children of God, but are tossed to and fro by the wind and the waves of other gods (Ephesians 4:14). We must deeply know God, His Word, His being, His love.

Knowledge of God

True knowledge of God may be defined as “facts, feelings, and proper relationship. Facts learned primarily in the study of God’s Word, feelings experienced in response to who we have come to understand Him to be, and a personal relationship with God that has been formed from shared experiences, commitment, and communication.”²⁰ Esoteric knowledge of God is like the dandelion that has died and looks like a puffball. It looks intriguing, fun to play with, and inviting. But when the wind comes, the pieces of the dandelion are blown every which way, it cannot thrive any longer. Theological *prolegomena* though includes the knowledge of God over and above knowledge about God.²¹ Personal knowledge of God resulting in a relationship with

¹⁹ Grenz, 52.

²⁰ Dunn and Senter II, *Reaching a Generation for Christ: A Comprehensive Guide to Youth Ministry*, 48.

²¹ R. D. Geivett, “Knowledge, God Of,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Daniel J. Treier and Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017), 471.

Him is like the dandelion that is bright and yellow, in full bloom. When the wind comes to blow it, it does not wither, it does not fail. It is stubborn to be uprooted. This true knowledge of God comes only from an encounter with God. It is important to note that in such an encounter God, and not the human person, is the active agent.²²

To Be Ultimately His

Exemplar pastor, Charles Spurgeon, stated in his sermon on the heart-knowledge of God that, “It is the great passion of the renewed soul to glorify God, whom he knows and loves; knowledge without love would be a powerless thing, but God has joined this knowledge and love together in a sacred wedlock, and they can never be put asunder. As we love God, we know him, and as we know him, we love him.”²³ Devoid knowledge of God, there is no basis to love and delight in Him. Knowledge of God is the springboard to exaltation of the King. Knowledge of God is attended by affection for Him. Where the Lord is fully known, He is intensely loved.²⁴ If one were to claim they loved fish tacos and devoted their life to fish tacos without ever having tasted a fish taco would be ridiculous. In the same way, we come to love and devote our lives to God because we have tasted and seen, we have come to know God. This faith we have is a personal form of knowledge: knowledge, “because God’s benevolence has a meaningful history, personal because we apprehend God’s benevolence toward us.”²⁵

Ends of Knowledge of God

To solidify the image of the vitality of knowing God, imagine it as the foundation of a house. A house may be entirely beautiful, have the buyers dream master bedroom, gorgeous marble countertops in the kitchen, have ample guest bedrooms, etc. However, if there is but a

²² Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 48.

²³ Charles Spurgeon, “Heart Knowledge of God” (Sermon, Newington, December 6, 1874).

²⁴ Spurgeon.

²⁵ Daniel J. Treier, *Introducing Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2019), 14.

crack in the foundation, the house becomes worthless. As the foundation of a house must be firmly crafted, so must the foundation of a person. A person may do many good things, bring many to Christ, attempt to glorify God, tithe consistently, etc., but until their foundation is built upon a personal knowledge of God, the rest is meaningless toil. A personal confidence in God's mercy through Christ "is not meritorious but rather an appropriating instrument, an empty hand outstretched to receive the free gift of God's righteousness in Christ; faith is God-given, the animating principle from which love and good works spontaneously spring; and communion with God means not mystical ecstasy but faith's everyday commerce with the savior."²⁶

Knowledge of God is a springboard to glorifying God and enjoying Him forever.

Before the fall, man was commanded to be in relationship with and to know God. Until the Lord returns, the Lord calls us to believe in and know Him. When the Lord calls us home and all are reconciled to Him, His cry will still be for all to believe in, have relationship with, and know Him. The ultimate purpose of humanity is to know God.

***POMS* Ultimate Purpose for Chris and Lori**

As the ultimate purpose for humanity is to know God, the ultimate purpose for *POMS* is to know God and to lead others to know God. If *POMS* were to fulfill the ultimate purpose in the lives of Chris and Lori, they would be steady disciples of Christ, students of His Word, obedient to His commands, and active participants in the Great Commission, both being and making disciples (Matthew 28:19-20). What is it worth that parents should know God? What is it worth that their children should know God? Simply it is the highest purpose in life—to know God.

If parents are to disciple their children, they must deeply know God themselves. Chris and Lori will turn from their checklists of church to-do's, they will understand discipling their

²⁶ J. I. Packer, "Faith," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Daniel Treier and Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017), 301.

students as more than instilling knowledge about God and catechesis into their students, but as a process of deeply knowing and falling in love with Jesus Christ. Following God is more than obeying commands, tithing well, doing good deeds, and so on and so far. All is meaningless toil until God is deeply known. Youth ministries exist for more than dodgeball and pizza, they exist to proclaim who God is to students. In the same way, *POMS* exists to do more than educate parents on hot topics pressing their teens. It leads them to deeply know God and to lead their children henceforth.

Conclusion

It is imperative that both the ultimate purpose for humanity and for *POMS* is understood by the reader. God's ultimate purpose for humanity is to know Him and subsequently be in relationship with Him. From a knowledge of God, flows the glorification of God and multiplication of disciples. God desires relationship with His people—for all to know Him. Out of this purpose for humanity, *POMS* exists to aid parents and guardians of middle schoolers at Upper Arlington Lutheran Church to come to know God personally so that they might effectively and confidently lead their children into such a knowledge of God. This purpose is relevant to Chris and Lori as it will lead them into a deeper love for and relationship with the Lord so that they will lead Nora into the same love for and relationship with the Lord.

Knowing God leads to loving God which leads to obeying God which leads to knowing God which leads to so on and so forth. As J.I. Packer exclaims, "...what higher, more exalted, and more compelling goal can there be than to know God?" Furthermore, what higher, more exalted, and more compelling goal can there be to lead your child to than to know God? As adolescents are seeking to find their place and purpose in their communities, it is crucial that

they come to rest in the knowledge of God, and who better to lead them in that than their parents or guardians?

Box B: Clearing the Worksite

Introduction

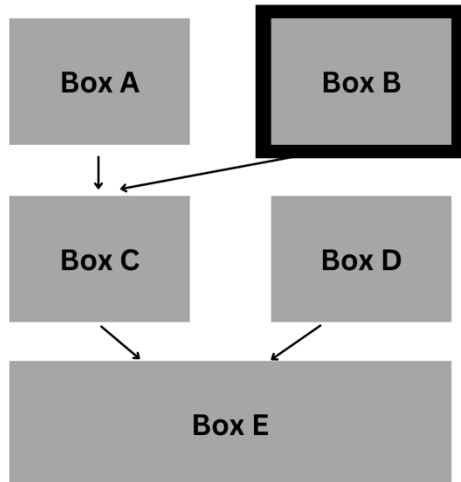


Figure 3: Frankena Model, Box B

To continue the metaphor of construction as *POMS* is constructed, the first step in construction is clearing and prepping the site. No matter the project, the site must be cleared of rocks, trees, uneven ground, etc. This is true of any construction project, the area must be cleared and leveled as a basis of practice. In the same way, when constructing a ministry, the ‘ground’ must be leveled and cleared. This section, also known as Box B under the

Frankena model, serves as the clearing out of the construction area (see Figure 3). This section will clear aside basic misconceptions and clarify what is pertinent and true of all people in all places but particularly *POMS*. These premises are foundational truths which are predicated by the ultimate purpose of humanity as derived from Box A.²⁷ These things which are true are known as premises or the nature of things. The five premises address the nature of God, Scripture, the Church, people and family.

Theological Premises

The Nature of God: God is personal and desires relationship with His people.

Undoubtedly Scripture reveals that God is abundantly personal, meaning He desires relationship with His people. The nature of the relationality of God is rooted in the relationship of the trinity. The trinity is deeply relational, being, “God the Father *with* God the Son *with* the

²⁷ Gary C. Newton, “Philosophy of Christian Education,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Christian Education*, ed. Michael Anthony (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2001), 534.

Holy Spirit.”²⁸ The relationship of God and His people echo the foundational relationship of the trinity. Zephaniah 3:17 states the God is in the midst of His people, He is with you. God does not merely rule over His people as king, He desires personal relationship so deeply that He sent His Son to earth. An impersonal God would not send His only begotten Son to dwell amongst His people on earth.

God, as Creator, created not out of requirement or boredom. This divine activity was entirely voluntary, effortless, rational, and a product of the overflow of the love of God.²⁹ God created for the purpose of delighting in relationship with His created beings. Sin physically separated humanity from God (Genesis 3:22-24) and the heart of God has henceforth been to restore the relationship through His Son Jesus Christ (John 3:16, Romans 5:8).

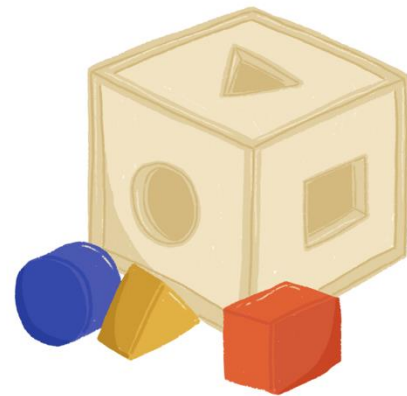


Figure 4: Shape Sorter

Imagine the toy intended for infants where an individual matches the three-dimensional objects to their corresponding cut-out holes (see Figure 4). The cube goes in the square hole, the cylinder in the circular hole, the triangular prism in the triangular hole, and so on and so forth. Now imagine that God is the triangle hole. Humanity is the triangular prism and is designed to be in relationship with the triangle hole. Yet sin distracts humanity to try and fall into the circular hole even though that is not in their best interest. The prism was always created for relationship with the triangle, the triangle awaits the prism, the toy works best when the two are in relationship. This is God with humanity. In this way, God deeply desires relationship with Chris and Lori.

²⁸ Skye Jethani, *With: Reimagining the Way You Related to God* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2011), 101.

²⁹ L. H. Osborn, “Creation,” in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, ed. T. Desmond Alexander et al. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 434.

This informs the ministry of *POMS*. If it is true that God desires relationship with all people, then it is true that God desires relationship with Chris and Lori and therefore relationship with their daughter Nora.

The Nature of Scripture: Scripture is the inspired, authoritative Word of God that leads us into relationship with Him.

How does God act in relationship towards His people? Through Scripture. The word Scripture refers to the divinely inspired collection of writings which tell the story of God and His people, also known as the Word of God. 2 Timothy 3:16 employs the Greek word *theopneustos* which literally translates as “God-breathed.” God breathed out Scripture, making this revealed Word “authoritative for human salvation and instruction in divine truth.”³⁰ God-breathed may also translate as inspired. This notion of inspiration simply refers to the divine intervention and authority by which Scripture was written. Though other people physically recorded and compiled what is now known as Scripture, the contents and composition of Scripture was inspired by God. Jews believe that holy Scriptures refer to “an established body of writings of divine origin, possessing authority for the people of God as well as for the individuals.”³¹ In other words, what Scripture says, God says. The assertion that Scripture is *theopneustos* as Paul states in 2 Timothy reveals God as relational. A God who speaks directly to His creation, His children, is a God who desires relationship with them.

The Gospel according to John refers to the Word, *logos*, of God, as Jesus Christ incarnate. The Word of God became flesh, Jesus Christ the incarnation of God, becomes a physical act of God’s self-revelation.³² Not only does the written Word of God speak to the

³⁰ R. K. Harrison, “Scripture,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017), 790.

³¹ E. J. Schnabel, “Scripture,” in *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000).

³² Harrison, “Scripture.”, 34-42.

relationality of His character, but the incarnation of the Word exemplifies and solidifies that God desires relationship amongst His people. Scripture acts as God's own self-revelation made known in Christ, to the proclamation of Christ in the apostolic ministry, and to the truth of Christ embodied in written form in the Scriptures.³³ In order to enjoy the relationship God desires, people must engage with the Word of God and accept it by faith. The reading and engagement of Scripture is the way in which God speaks to His people, the way in which God speaks to Chris and Lori. *POMS* must then have an emphasis and regard for the authority of Scripture and its relational nature.

The Nature of the Church: Equipping the laity for ministry is a central task of church leaders.

So, Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.
—Ephesians 4:11-13 (NIV)

What Paul establishes in his letter to the church in Ephesus clearly establishes a central task of the church—to equip the laity for ministry. The role of church leaders, in this context meaning pastors, teachers, directors, is to equip the people for works of service, which in Greek is *diakonia*. The NIV translates *diakonia* as service, whereas all other translations equate this to mean “for the work of ministry.” *Diakonia* refers not to a particular spiritual gifting rather the service the saints are to do encompasses all iterations of the word: service necessary for the preparation of a meal (Luke 10:40), financial relief (2 Corinthians 9:12), physical work (2 Timothy 4:11), etc. In accordance with the list of spiritual giftings in Ephesians 4:11, so *διακονία* is an expansion upon what others are to do with their spiritual gifts which is not

³³ H.D. McDonald, “Word, Word of God, Word of the Lord,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017), 945-946.

limited to apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. Works of ministry are not bound exclusively to those in full time ministry.

The church ought to partner with the laity to equip them for the purposes of the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20). The church, or *ekklesia*, defines not only what believers are but who they are. The *ekklesia* is a missional community sent for relational purposes which are to “worship God, nurture one another, and bear witness to society in word and deed.”³⁴ Leaders within the church are uniquely called and gifted to prepare and equip the greater *ekklesia* to

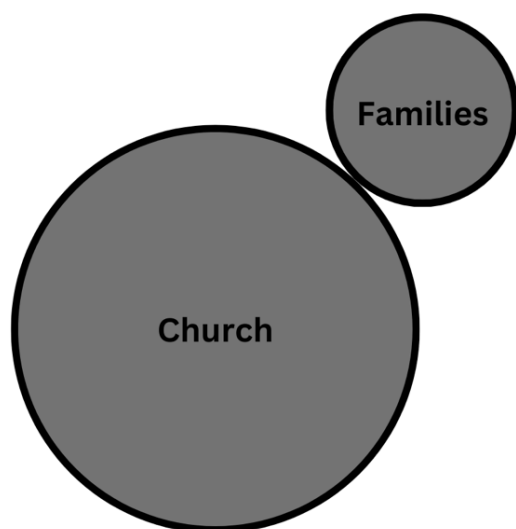


Figure 5: One-Eared Mickey Mouse Church

fulfill the purpose of the missional community. If the church is led as if families, or congregants, were not a part of the mission it would look as Stuart Cummings-Bond described, the one eared Mickey Mouse (see Figure 5).³⁵ Compartmentalizing ministerial tasks is inefficient and furthermore dangerous to the spiritual growth and development of individuals. Families cannot grow in their faith

development when they are excluded from the church, unable to serve. Family ministry cannot be an appendix of the church. Church leaders therefore must walk alongside families to equip them for ministry. This would shift the One-Eared Mickey Mouse paradigm of ministry to a

³⁴ Daniel J. Treier, *Introducing Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2019), 321.

³⁵ Dunn and Senter II, *Reaching a Generation for Christ: A Comprehensive Guide to Youth Ministry*, 492.

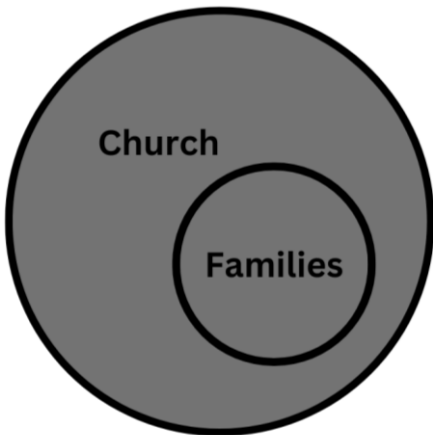


Figure 6: Unification of Church and Family

unified circle model (see Figure 6). *POMS* therefore partners with Chris and Lori to equip and mobilize them to disciple Nora.

Anthropological Premises

The Nature of People: People are created in the image of God which means they were created for relationships.

As aforementioned, God is personal and desires

relationship with His people. In the same way, people

desire relationship with others and with God.³⁶ People

need healthy relationships in order for faith development to occur. As we understand people, we understand God and if we understand God, we understand people. Genesis 1:27 proclaims that God created humankind in His image. Inasmuch, humanity mimics His desire for relationship. Thinking about the *imago dei* must be done Christologically according to theologian Karl Barth as Christ is the one fully in God's image. Christ exemplifies in His humanity that the image of God involves community, intimacy, and mutual self-giving love—relationship. Intimacy and relationship are bound in the creation narrative.³⁷ God declared all of creation *tov* meaning good, except for the loneliness of man. The nature of humanity, made in the image of God demands relational intimacy. Chris and Lori desire relationship with each other through the intimacy of marriage and also desire relationship with their daughter Nora. *POMS* recognizes this crucial relational need and creates bridges to foster relational growth and development.

³⁶ K. L. Dearborn, "Image of God," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Daniel Treier and Walter Elwell, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017), 415–17.

³⁷ Scot McKnight and Laura Barringer, *A Church Called Tov: Forming a Goodness Culture That Resists Abuses of Power and Promotes Healing* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2020), 72.

Cognitively, individuals learn best with social interaction, in relationship with others.³⁸ Even the intricacies of cognitive development echo the deep need for relationship in humanity. Abraham Maslow, famous psychologist best known for his hierarchy of needs, states that above physiological and safety needs come relational needs.³⁹ In order for an individual to have their needs satisfied, they must have a sense of love and belonging, they must be in relationship with others. God intimately designed humanity, like Himself, to desire the beauty of relationship with one another.

The Nature of Family: The family plays a vital role in faith development.

God created the family unit to play a key role in faith education. Parents often fail to satisfy their task as teachers because of ignorance and lack of competence and confidence.⁴⁰ Having parents who believe does not predicate or guarantee a child will walk in the way of the Lord. Yet, parents are uniquely positioned to serve as teachers to their children. Adolescents must be taught by their parents about faith in God, life values, communication, discipline, and practical skills.⁴¹ Chris and Lori have an advantage to teaching their daughter. The *shema* declares:

These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates. –Deuteronomy 6:6-9 (NIV)

³⁸ Perry G. Downs, *Teaching for Spiritual Growth: An Introduction to Christian Education* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994), 72.

³⁹ Susan Willhauck, “Abraham Maslow,” in *Encyclopedia of Christian Education* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2015), 779.

⁴⁰ Binsen Samuel Sidjabat, “Parents as Teachers,” in *Encyclopedia of Christian Education* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2015), 932.

⁴¹ Sidjabat, 932.

Parents are instructed by law in the Old Testament to instruct their children in the way of the Lord. The primacy of parental teaching is not exclusive to the *Torah*, the New Testament also speaks to the obedience of children to parents (Ephesians 6:1; Colossians 3:20). Leading children in the way of the Lord was also highly praised by Jesus (Matthew 19:13-15).

Psychologically, parents have the strongest influence on the development of an adolescent.⁴² Adolescents look to their parents or guardians as their functional family, which Diana Garland defines as the verb in which people in a family unit have roles and function with one another.⁴³ These individuals play an integral role in their faith development as adolescents look to mimic the behavior of the parent.⁴⁴ The contemporary parental pandemic which includes a lack of preparedness and competency to disciple their children demands the partnership between parents and the church. The church ought to walk alongside parents in the discipleship process of their children through seminars, workshops, or small group fellowships. *POMS* works to defeat the fear Chris and Lori may have, preparing them so that they might disciple Nora in confidence and with competency. It is necessary for them to understand that nurturing children is a divine calling from God.⁴⁵

Conclusion

These premises introduced the nature of God, Scripture, the Church, people, and families as true of all people in all times and places but specifically as relevant to *POMS*. Chris and Lori made in the image of God desire relationships as God desires relationship with them which may be obtained through engagement with Scripture. They long for relationship with their daughter

⁴² Dunn and Senter II, *Reaching a Generation for Christ: A Comprehensive Guide to Youth Ministry*, 497.

⁴³ Diana R Garland, *Family Ministry: A Comprehensive Guide*, Second (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 36.

⁴⁴ Gary A. Parrett and Steve Kang, *Teaching the Faith, Forming the Faithful: A Biblical Vision for Education in the Church* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 115.

⁴⁵ Sidjabat, "Parents as Teachers.", 932.

and play a unique role in her faith development as the church walks alongside them. These premises of Box B created out of the ultimate purpose of mankind established in Box A will springboard the construction of *POMS* into a conversation of the excellencies of Box C. The clearing of the construction site now sets the stage for building such a ministry.

Box C: Reading the Blueprint

Introduction

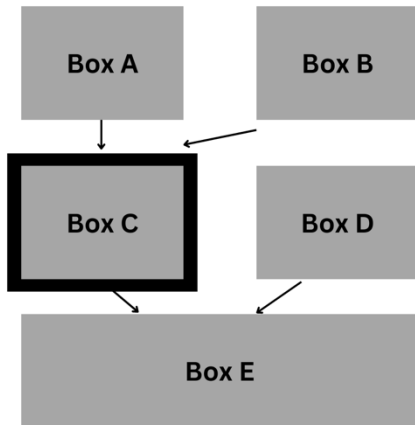


Figure 7: Frankena Model, Box C

The task of building a house requires a blueprint—a vision for the final product. A blueprint outlines the goal(s) of a project. Consider this section, Box C (see Figure 7), as the blueprint for *POMS*, the vision for the end. Box C acts as the culmination of Boxes A and B. Box C states and establishes the excellences which “are outcomes of an educational endeavor.”⁴⁶ The ultimate purpose of humanity established in Box A and the premises laid

out in Box B, form the basis for these excellencies, or desired aims. These goals for products of or participants in *POMS* include but are not limited to the following five C’s: communion, compassion, commitment, competency, and confidence. In other words, if Chris and Lori are active participants in *POMS* what attributes, abilities, habits, or postures will form? This section will expound upon each of these goals and their explicit facets of meaning through the fictitious lives of Chris and Lori.

Communion

Participants of *POMS* will practice communion with God and others. This excellency is four-fold. As a product of this ministry, Chris and Lori will be in communion with God, with the church, with others in similar life stages, and with their daughter, Nora (see Figure 8).

Communion in this sense refers both to *communio sanctorum*, communion of Saints, as well as

⁴⁶ Daniel C. Stevens, “Frankena, William Klaus,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Christian Education*, ed. Michael Anthony (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2001), 302.

the intimate participation or spiritual bonding with God.⁴⁷ Participants of *POMS* will conclude that if they desire to follow Jesus, He must be close to their hearts. If He is close to their hearts,

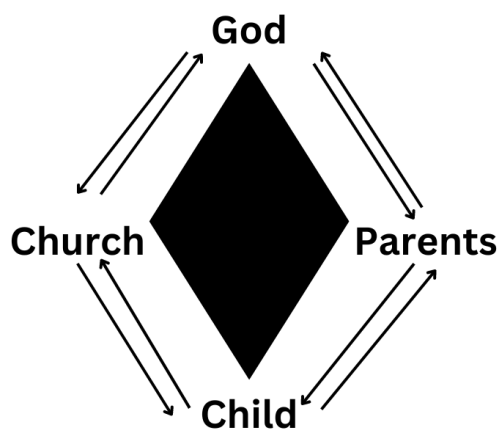


Figure 8: Communion of Saints Depiction

the overflow will become their topic of conversation and they will therefore be apt to talk to their children about the Gospel of Jesus Christ.⁴⁸ John 15:5 provides the basis for this excellency. Chris and Lori are to abide in Christ as He abides in us and put of this abiding, Chris and Lori may abide with others. As established in both Box A and Box B, both God and humanity are relational. Individuals are first called to be in relationship with God. Os Guinness, author, pastor, and theologian, refers to this as our primary calling—by Him, to Him, for Him, in other words, to be in relationship with Christ.⁴⁹ Through the ministry of *POMS*, first and foremost Chris and Lori will understand that they are called into relationship with God. They will develop skills to practice being in relationship with Him through Scripture engagement as well as other spiritual disciplines.

Individuals oft become preoccupied with the world and overwhelmed by the pace of life. Chris and Lori are overwhelmed by work, the stressors of marriage and parenthood, running Nora around, etc. They are busy with Nora and God but are not really engaging with Nora or

⁴⁷ Stanley J. Grenz, *Created for Community: Connecting Christian Belief with Christian Living*, Second (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1996), 215.

⁴⁸ George Thomas Kurian, "Communion of the Saints," in *Encyclopedia of Christian Education* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2015), 317.

⁴⁹ Os Guinness, *The Call: Finding and Fulfilling the Central Purpose of Your Life* (Nashville: Word Publishing, 1998), 31.

God. C.S. Lewis eloquently writes on the condition of busyness by saying, “We may ignore, but we can nowhere evade, the presence of God. The world is crowded with Him. He walks everything incognito.”⁵⁰ Practicing the presence of God is a surrendering of self, devoting time to be in relationship with Him, “to love Him and stay connected to Him throughout the day.”⁵¹ If Chris and Lori are to be in relationship with God, they must spend time with Him. To spend time with God is to have Him close to heart. A.W. Tozer expands on the concept of relationship between God and humanity by stating, “The things that are closest to our hearts are the things we talk about and if God is close to your heart, you will talk about Him.”⁵²

POMS will demonstrate to Chris and Lori and equip them with practical practices to be in relationship with God. The concept of the communion of saints as previously mentioned involves the bonding “vertically with God and Jesus Christ...then horizontally with fellow believers,” through the bonding agent of the Holy Spirit.⁵³ To be in relationship with God is to be in relationship with others. The church, *ekklesia*, is a fellowshiping people. Therefore, *POMS* creates bridges for participants such as Chris and Lori to be in fellowship with God, the church, as well as other parent-participants. The church must partner with parents as a resource to them as they embark on the ever-challenging endeavor of parenting.

As parents desperately need a partnership with the church so they need a partnership with other parents. Parenting presents itself as an individualistic endeavor, however, as the saying goes, “it takes a village.” It takes a village to support the child but also to support the parent. As

⁵⁰ C. S. (Clive Staples) Lewis, *Letters to Malcom: Chiefly on Prayer--Reflections on the Intimate Dialogue Between Man and God* (New York, NY: First Mariner Books, 1964), 75.

⁵¹ Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices That Transform Us* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 60.

⁵² A.W. Tozer, *Tozer Speaks*, ed. Aiden Wilson, vol. 1 (Camp Hill, PN: Wingspread Publishers, 1994).

⁵³ Kurian, “Communion of the Saints.”, 317.

Chris and Lori are participants of parenting middle schoolers, so a community of peers in similar life stages should surround them.

Finally, Chris and Lori will be in communion with Nora. Presumably, Chris and Lori have a relationship with Nora, however, as a product of POMS, this relationship will be revitalized and prioritized as a means designed by God to “[compel] adolescents toward the goal of Christlikeness.”⁵⁴ In order for youth ministry to occur, an adult, in this case Chris and Lori, must use their relationship with an adolescent, Nora, as a catalyst to draw her (an adolescent) “into a maturing relationship with God through Jesus Christ.”⁵⁵ If Chris and Lori fail to prioritize a relationship with Nora, they will find difficulty in leading her to Christlikeness. As a result of participation in *POMS*, Chris and Lori will be in communion with God, the church, likeminded peers, and Nora.

Compassion

Participants of *POMS* will exhibit compassion towards their children. As Chris and Lori are in communion with Nora, they will develop a deep compassion for her and her spiritual needs despite the turbulence of adolescents. When they become parents, individuals are overwhelmed with a love they never thought imaginable simply through the first breath of their children.⁵⁶ If the ultimate purpose of humanity is to know God intimately as defined in Box A and it is true that humanity is to image God in His relationality, then compassion would be consequential to communion as God desires relationship with humanity out of His great love

⁵⁴ Richard R. Dunn, *Shaping the Spiritual Life of Students: A Guide for Youth Workers, Pastors, Teachers Campus Ministers* (InterVarsity Press, 2001), 50.

⁵⁵ Dunn and Senter II, *Reaching a Generation for Christ: A Comprehensive Guide to Youth Ministry*, 125.

⁵⁶ Dan B. Allender, *How Children Raise Parents* (Colorado Springs, CO: WaterBrook Press, 2003), 3.

(John 3:16; 1 John 4:19). Our communion with one another leads to deeper love and compassion. Richard Dunn, renowned youth ministry specialist, refers to this practice as pacing empathy.⁵⁷

In a study completed by the Journal of Counseling and Development in 2000, 80.5% of a sample of middle schoolers report accounts of bullying monthly.⁵⁸ Because middle schoolers are bound to experience difficulties in the tumult of early adolescence, they desperately need the compassion and nurture of adults. Beyond this, they need strong and positive parental influence. Of aforementioned parent sample, the likelihood of bullying amongst adolescents with healthy relationships and frequent encounters with parents significantly decreased. Practicing compassion with adolescents involves intently listening to their specific needs and desires. This anticipated excellency of *POMS* allows parents to “sense how they can pray for and introduce God’s embrace of grace” to their children.⁵⁹

Commitment

From the integration of practicing compassion, participants of *POMS* such as Chris and Lori will make a commitment and heed the call to take personal responsibility for domestic discipleship. For spiritual formation to “stick,” parents must heed the call of discipling their children and be active in the spiritual formation of their lives.⁶⁰ As Box B established, the family plays a vital role in faith development. The influence of Chris and Lori on Nora’s life will supersede the influence of the youth worker, teachers, peers, media, etc.⁶¹ The most important pastor to teenagers is their parents.⁶² In fact, Judaic thought as seen throughout the Old

⁵⁷ Dunn, *Shaping the Spiritual Life of Students*, 77.

⁵⁸ Dorothy L. Espelage, Kris Bosworth, and Thomas R. Simon, “Examining the Social Context of Bullying Behaviors in Early Adolescence,” *Journal of Counseling and Development* 78 (2000), 326-333.

⁵⁹ Dunn, *Shaping the Spiritual Life of Students*, 77.

⁶⁰ Kara Powell and Chap Clark, *Sticky Faith: Everyday Ideas to Build Lasting Faith in Your Kids* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011).

⁶¹ Dunn and Senter II, *Reaching a Generation for Christ: A Comprehensive Guide to Youth Ministry*, 129.

⁶² Mark Oestreicher and Scott Rubin, *Middle School Ministry: A Comprehensive Guide to Working with Early Adolescents* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009), 309.

Testament as well as in modern practices asserts that “the Jewish home is taken to be a small sanctuary,”⁶³ likewise, the Christian home should be taken to be a small sanctuary as Jesus calls believers to (Matthew 18:1-3, 19:14; Ephesians 6:4). As the ultimate purpose of humanity is to know God, it is a fundamental role of the parental unit to lead their children to maturity in faith. *POMS* implores participants to hear this truth and act upon it.

Upon participating in this ministry, Chris and Lori will make the discipleship of Nora a priority in the way in which their family functions. They will be committed to partnering with the church in the spiritual formation of her life. Their actions which reflect this excellency may include, engaging with the director of Next Generation Ministries or the director of Middle School Ministry when it comes to questions of discipleship, they may partake in weekly sabbath, praying over meals aloud, reading Scripture together, attending church weekly, praying together as a family before school and work, etc. Complacency in the spiritual formation of Nora will not be tolerated by Chris and Lori.

Competency

Participants of *POMS* will express competency of parental discipleship tactics (PDT) and their biblical foundations. In John 10:27 Jesus proclaims that His sheep listen to His voice, He knows them, and they follow Him. As Box A established, knowing God and being in relationship with him is foundational to spiritual formation. Furthermore, Box B established that Scripture is the vice by which believers are drawn into relationship with Jesus Christ. Disciples of Christ are cognizant and competent of the voice of the Lord and are obedient to it. Chris and Lori, through the ministry of *POMS* will come to be active disciples of Christ and will then make a disciple of Christ (Nora) per the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20). But how? Programmatically,

⁶³ Parrett and Kang, *Teaching the Faith, Forming the Faithful: A Biblical Vision for Education in the Church*, 151.

POMS will provide adequate resources through workshops, case studies, conversations, fellowship, reading excerpts, small groups, and so on.

Chris and Lori will be competent through acquisition of theological prolegomena.⁶⁴ Through the discipleship program of *POMS*, they will comprehend and engage with Scripture, creating a personal theology of God and their relationship to Him. Beyond a competency of Scripture, Chris and Lori will be cognizant of the development and psychological needs of Nora in early adolescence. In order to love her best, and have compassion on her, a previously mentioned excellency, they will be able to articulate her developmental, spiritual, psychological, and social needs. As a child reaches middle school, typically early adolescence, they begin to think more abstractly and have a myriad of new thoughts to process.⁶⁵ Chris and Lori must be equipped and competent enough to wrestle through these questions with them. As Nora interacts with her parents, they will have the competency to model Christlikeness to her and guide her lovingly into also walking towards Christlikeness. As presented in Box B, the nature of the church is to equip the laity for ministry, *POMS'* goal is to equip parents such as Chris and Lori with adequate skills to disciple Nora.

Confidence

Finally participants of *POMS* will display confidence in God to disciple their children and be mobilized. Scripturally, this excellency is based in the Great Commission, Matthew 28:19-20, and Acts 2:42-47. Disciples, when fully equipped, express the confidence in Christ to make disciples as commanded by Jesus. If Chris and Lori know God deeply, as established is the ultimate purpose in Box A, and understand the nature of God, Scripture, people, and family, as

⁶⁴ R.D. Geivett, "Knowledge," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Daniel J. Trier (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017), 471.

⁶⁵ Leon M. Blanchette Jr., "Ministry with Children," in *Christian Education: A Guide to the Foundations of Ministry*, ed. Freddy Cardoza (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2019), 235.

established in Box B, they will be confident in their call to play an active role in the spiritual formation of Nora. Furthermore, through their participation in *POMS*, they will be confidently mobilized to take their knowledge of God, Scripture, the needs of Nora, and discipleship methods to disciple her outside the church. Ministry to youth reaches peak effectiveness when an adult confidently enters the life of an adolescent and meets them where they are at with truth and grace.⁶⁶ *POMS* leads parents into a posture to develop environments where they can engage in difficult and formative conversations, thus mobilizing them into discipling their child.

Conclusion

The blueprint for *POMS* illustrates the excellencies which parents such as Chris and Lori will exhibit after actively participating in the ministry. The excellencies include communion, compassion, commitment, competency, and confidence. Each excellency is a means towards the end of producing parents that are well resourced and therefore equipped and mobilized to disciple their children. The practices and methods of ministry employed by *POMS* are designed with the intent of the former excellencies.

⁶⁶ Dunn and Senter II, *Reaching a Generation for Christ: A Comprehensive Guide to Youth Ministry*, 125.

Box D: Picking the Materials

Introduction

As we continue to metaphorically construct a house, we must use proper building materials. Different construction projects and different contexts require different building materials. Imagine someone who moves to the heat of Arizona and builds an igloo for a home. This house would collapse almost immediately—because the methods did not appropriately match the context. This Arizonian architect would have done well to research the best material to build houses in such a hot climate. Just as with houses, in building a ministry there are different materials, or teaching methods, required for different contexts. This section of the paper, which we will call Box D, establishes, and discusses the best theories and practices for building a ministry (see Figure 9). Box D explores the relationship between learning and ministry. Various theories of learning which will best shape the ministry of *POMS* are discussed in this section.

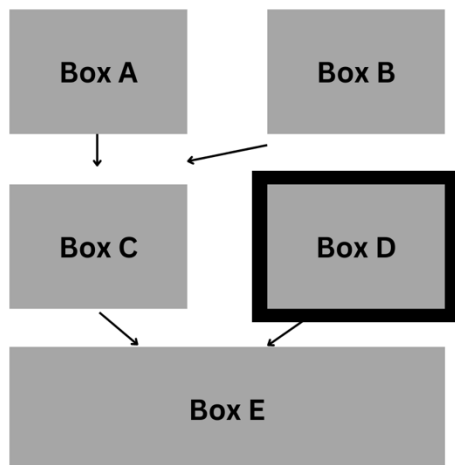


Figure 9: Frankena Model, Box D

In the Frankena model, Box D serves to indicate the psychological and sociological methods or theories which would best fit the purposes of the ministry.⁶⁷ These processes should be consistent with the premises of Box B and would lead to the profiles of *POMS* established in Box C. The processes discussed below are Malcom Knowles' Adult Learning Theory and Albert Bandura's Social

Learning Theory with an emphasis on modeling. This discussion will largely focus on the

⁶⁷ Darwin K Glassford, "Philosophy of Ministry," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Christian Education*, ed. Michael Anthony (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2001), 302.

implications of these theories on the parent participants in *POMS*, but they also have implication for the child.

Learning traditionally refers to the change in behavior due to experiences. Learning is defined as a discovery made by individuals of their “relationship to an object, event, process, idea, other persons, God, or self; [it] may or may not be outward behavior that is quantitatively measurable as a result of the inner discovery.”⁶⁸ Individuals learn through the process of modifying behaviors and attitudes by the prompting of the Holy Spirit “to conform more to the will of God and the image of Christ.”⁶⁹ Understanding learning theories is pertinent for the purposes of this paper for two reasons: (1) theories call attention to the overall continuity and interrelatedness of aspects of development, particularly as described earlier in this philosophy of ministry, and (2) for both the teacher and learner to be exposed to—and therefore to expand—his or her repertoire of methods of learning. Adult learning is multidisciplinary and therefore requires mention of multiple methodological approaches and theories.

No matter the theory employed, one cannot disregard the integration of the Holy Spirit as an agent of learning. As evidenced in Scripture, the Holy Spirit aids in the Christian Educational process as well as in ministry. Without the Holy Spirit, no one can accept Christ nor be His disciple (John 14:15-17). Learning is deeply transformation in and of itself, and therefore has profound implications for spiritual formation.⁷⁰ Learning in faith contexts is inadvertently

⁶⁸ Daniel L. Barlow, *Educational Psychology: The Teaching-Learning Process* (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1985), 70.

⁶⁹ Roy B. Zuck, *Spirit-Filled Teaching: The Power of the Holy Spirit in Your Ministry* (Nashville, TN: Word Publishing, 1998), 115.

⁷⁰ Shelley Trebesch, “Adult Learning,” in *Encyclopedia of Christian Education* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), 16.

intertwined with the work of the Spirit. As Chris and Lori learn and grow through *POMS*, they grow spiritually, and the Spirit henceforth intricately works in their lives.

Adult Learning Theory

The first theory of discussion is Malcom Knowles' Adult Learning Theory.⁷¹ Knowles begins with the premise that adults are capable of learning.⁷² Education does not end when an individual graduates from traditional school. Education is an ongoing process that adults are capable of. Knowles presents six andragogical assumptions:

1. Mature adults are self-directed human beings.
2. Adults have a rich reservoir of experience, which is a resource for learning.
3. The openness of adults to learning is related to the ways in which they need to develop in their life roles.
4. Adults look for immediate applications of their learning and so become more problems centered than subject centered.
5. An adult's willingness to learn comes from within rather than from external sources.
6. Adults need to know the reason for learning something.⁷³

Each assumption has programmatic implications and emphasizes the process of learning rather than solely content.⁷⁴

The implications of adults being self-directed require differentiation in environment.

Chris and Lori require educational practices that vary from children. The learning environment

⁷¹ Nigel Rooms, "Malcom Knowles," in *Encyclopedia of Christian Education* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), 686.

⁷² Malcom Knowles, *The Modern Practice of Adult Education*, Revised and Updated (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Cambridge Adult Education, 1980), 50.

⁷³ Knowles, 43.

⁷⁴ Sharan B. Merriam and Laura L. Bierema, *Adulting Learning: Linking Theory and Practice* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2014), 47.

must be adult-sized and comfortable. Adult learning is primarily dialogical and based upon the rich reservoir of experience, the learning environment must also be conducive to this. For example, a speaker on a podium may cause Chris and Lori to feel “talked down to” whereas a teacher on the ground level with a small table may be more appropriate, making all parties feel as equals.⁷⁵ Furthermore, adults may benefit from dialoging with peers based on information presented. Considering the self-directed and self-motivated learning preference of adults as well as their need for immediate application, the traditional method of the teacher informing the student of what must be learned, adults require a self-diagnosis method of learning. This idea presented by Knowles invites learners to be motivated to discover what it is they are to learn.⁷⁶ This method creates a desire and need in Chris and Lori to learn—they take full responsibility for their pace of learning. They self-diagnose their need to learn, their need to improve, and recognize their level of competency and ability. Upon discovering content for themselves, they have reason to learn and are motivated to put concepts into action.

In congruence with the self-diagnosis process, the role of the teacher is redefined. The teacher no longer simply teaches information. Rather, the teacher becomes a resource person, a “procedural technician,” a guide, a catalyst rather than an instructor.⁷⁷ Teachers in *POMS* walk alongside parents in their self-directed discovery of discipleship methods.⁷⁸ Chris and Lori, call upon the teacher at their pace, only when needed. This allows for them to feel in control of their learning; as though they are capable and competent rather than helpless parents.

⁷⁵ Knowles, *The Modern Practice of Adult Education*, 47.

⁷⁶ Knowles, 47.

⁷⁷ Knowles, 48.

⁷⁸ Merriam and Bierema, *Adulting Learning: Linking Theory and Practice*, 66.

Social Learning Theory

The following theory, known as the Social Learning Theory, was largely developed by Albert Bandura. Bandura describes four components of the process: paying attention, retaining information or impressions, producing behaviors, and being motivated to repeat behaviors. Bandura developed a term to describe the art and science of adult learning which is andragogy. The andragogical assumption present is that individuals learn by

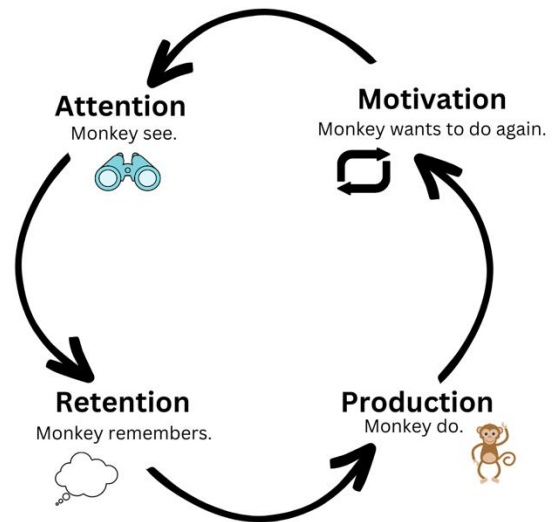


Figure 10: Student See, Student Do Cycle

example—much like the common phrase “monkey see, monkey do,” (see Figure 10).

Individuals, like the monkey in this example, see actions or behaviors of others and mimic them. Bandura distinguishes between the acquisition of knowledge and observable performance based on that knowledge—we know more than we show.⁷⁹ Through his social learning theory premises, Bandura emphasizes the psychological influence of modeling. Figure ten reflects the four components of the process in terms relative to the monkey saying.

The aim of discipleship is clear: to be transformed into the likeness of Christ (2 Cor 3:18). In this way, Christ is the model of the disciple. Followers of Christ are called to imitate Christ in this way. The Greek word for imitator, μιμητης, is used eleven times in Scripture in reference to this same notion of modeling (1 Cor 4:16, 11:1; Eph 5:1, 1 Thess 1:6, 2:14; Heb 6:12, etc.)⁸⁰ Similarly, two words for example *typos* (τυπος) and *hypodeigma* (υποδειγμα) are

⁷⁹ William R. Yount, *Created to Learn: A Christian Teacher's Introduction to Educational Psychology*, Second (Nashville, TN: B & H Academic, 2010), 217.

⁸⁰ Klaus Issler and Ronald Habermas, *How We Learn: A Christian Teacher's Guide to Educational Psychology* (Eugene, OR: Resource Publications, 1994), 82.

used over fifteen times to implore the early church to learn from models of disciples.⁸¹

Acknowledging the Social Learning theory, leaders of *POMS* then ought to model Christ and methods of discipleship in order for parents to attend to their behaviors and then reproduce modeled methods. On a broad scale, congregants of churches in America are unaware of what disciples look like. They lack models of faith and therefore cannot replicate the process of disciple making.⁸² Chris and Lori must have models of disciples and disciple makers if they are to make a disciple out of Nora and heed the call of the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19-20). Individuals who seek to be and make disciples require the process of modeling as a theory of learning.

Since learners imitate what they have been shown, it is imperative that the actions of the educator are imitations of Christ. As it is written in 2 Peter 5:2-4, “Shepherd (or disciple) God’s flock among you...not lording it over those entrusted to you but being examples (τυπος) to the flock.” Learning by example requires attending to an example or model. If an individual has no model, they cannot replicate a behavior.⁸³ The leaders of *POMS* will act as models of Christ for Chris and Lori. Behaviors and behavioral restraints are most strongly developed through the observations of consequences experienced by models.⁸⁴ The couple can then mentally rehearse the behaviors which have been modeled to them. Mental rehearsal—or as labeled by Bandura—retention is the idea of replaying concepts and actions in one’s head over and over so that they may be confident before completing the action.⁸⁵ Actors and actresses mentally rehearse as they

⁸¹ Issler and Habermas, 82.

⁸² Aubrey Malphurs, *Strategic Disciple Making: A Practical Tool for Disciple Making* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2009), 77.

⁸³ Albert Bandura, *Social Learning Theory* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1977), 28.

⁸⁴ Bandura, *Social Learning Theory*, 49.

⁸⁵ Yount, *Created to Learn: A Christian Teacher’s Introduction to Educational Psychology*, 220.

await their cue in the wings of a stage: they run through their lines and blocking incessantly, remember the feedback they were given—good and bad—to guarantee a confident and flawless performance. In the same way, Chris and Lori would mentally rehearse things they had seen and discussed at *POMS* in order to replicate it with Nora at home. Parents, according to the research of Bandura, are the most important and influential models in the life of an adolescent and should seek to model discipleship to their children.⁸⁶ *POMS* functions to equip and mobilize parents to disciple their children. In this, parents' ought to be confident in their abilities to disciple their children. Mentally rehearsing and practicing methods of discipleship would lead to such a confidence.

The next step in Bandura's process is known as production or reproduction. This refers to the cycle of selecting and organizing what has been retained by the learner, performing the behavior, then critiquing and refining their performance.⁸⁷ Reproduction of learned material requires repetition in practice and evaluation. Individuals evaluate what they value; if they value the content, such as discipleship, they will evaluate their work. Learners need practice, feedback and coaching.⁸⁸ Finally, Bandura discusses the motivation of learners. Motivation per Bandura's explanation refers to the reinforcement of practices that lead individuals towards personal desire to learn and improve. In *POMS* it is crucial that parents are internally motivated to disciple their child.

⁸⁶ William R. Yount, *Created to Learn: A Christian Teacher's Introduction to Educational Psychology*, Second (Nashville, TN: B & H Academic, 2010), 219.

⁸⁷ Yount, 221.

⁸⁸ Yount, 221.

Holy Spirit

As it is written, believers will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes to become witnesses of His name, that is to make disciples (Acts 1:8). The Holy Spirit alone allows Chris and Lori to grow spiritually and to lead Nora in her faith development. Bandura notes in his research that learning would be “exceedingly laborious and hazardous should individuals rely solely on the effects of their own actions to inform them what to do.”⁸⁹ Though not directly referring to the Spirit, Bandura recognizes that individuals are not entirely responsible for their learning. The Spirit is responsible for teaching and inspiring growth.

John 14 explains the role of the Holy Spirit ultimately as a teacher and the “one who illuminates and guides.” Hank Voss deduces that John 14 reveals that the Holy Spirit “works *through* us and walks *with* us, but he also makes His home *in* us.”⁹⁰ As the Spirit dwells within Chris and Lori, they receive power (Acts 1:8), they are convicted, given guidance and gifts, and produce fruit which is disciples. Without the Spirit, they would be unable to be convicted and motivated to disciple Nora. Spiritual maturity and conformity to Christ, the aim of discipleship, means knowing, loving, and obeying God. This may only be done through the power of the Holy Spirit. Spirituality and conformity to Christ is measured not by the breadth of knowledge or the usages of learning theories, but the way in which an individual continually walks with the Holy Spirit in love and obedience.

How are we to walk with the Holy Spirit? Through prayer. Prayer is discipleship. Prayer is imperative before, during, and after the discipleship process. Through the Holy Spirit we pray so that we might receive the power as written in Acts 1:8. A ministry without prayer is like a car

⁸⁹ Bandura, *Social Learning Theory*, 52.

⁹⁰ Uche Anizor, Rob Price, and Hank Voss, *Evangelical Theology* (New York, NY: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2021), 177.

with no gas. Sure, it is still a car, but it has no power to go anywhere. Through prayer, Chris and Lori will be convicted of the ways in which they should disciple Nora. Through prayer, Chris and Lori will be in communion with God. Through prayer, Chris and Lori will learn be prompted by the Spirit. Through prayer they are reminded that ultimately it is the Lord who will build the house (Psalm 127:1).

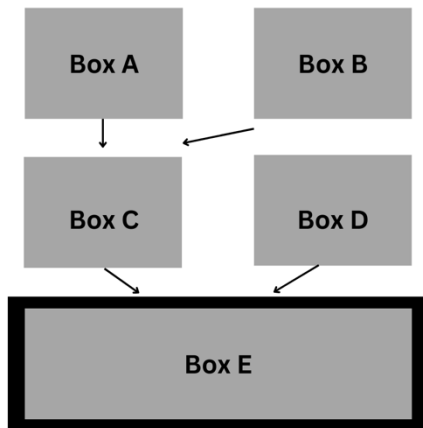
Conclusion

Different construction projects require different building materials. In the same way, different ministries require different processes of teaching and learning. Knowles' theory of adult learning and Bandura's social learning theory are two processes which would best serve the context of *POMS*. According to these theories since Chris and Lori are capable of learning and bring much to the table in terms of their knowledge bank, they require self-directed and dialogical teaching methods. The couple also must have discipleship models in their lives to mimic and reduplicate. Finally, the Holy Spirit enables parents to learn and to disciple their children. The next section will take the implications of these processes and the educational needs of Chris and Lori and turn them into specified practices in *POMS*.

Box E: Raising the Roof

Introduction

The final step in constructing a house, is to nail all of the pieces together. In previous



sections we have done the ‘grunt work’ of establishing what we are building, clearing the work area, crafting a blueprint, and picking out the proper materials. The only step left is to build the house. We raise the roof, humorously and literally. William Frankena uses the language of “Box E” as the culmination of the previous four boxes. Box E

concludes the building process by representing “practical precepts” for accomplishing the excellences as established by Box C (see Figure 11).⁹¹ This section will discuss five practices or programs to develop the five excellences, established in Box C: communion, compassion, commitment, competency, and confidence.

Many works implore youth ministries and churches to employ “family-based ministry.”

What does “family-based ministry” refer to and what makes it imperative for churches? Most

resources on family ministry define it differently or lack a definition altogether; “because of this

Figure 11: Frankena Model, Box E

lack of a common perception of family ministry,

people responsible for family ministry in churches are often confused and frustrated.”⁹² A

family-based ministry requires equal participation from the church and the families in the

spiritual formation of adolescents. Each children’s or youth ministry works towards not only

equipping and building up the students, but their families as well “for the work of ministry”

⁹¹ Stevens, “Frankena, William Klaus,” 302.

⁹² Michael Anthony and Michelle Anthony, *A Theology for Family Ministries*, 2011, 155.

(Ephesians 4:10-16). If parents play a pivotal role in the spiritual development of students, parents must be equipped to minister to their children the other six days of the week where students are not at youth group. As a family-based ministry, *POMS* functions to co-champion the responsibilities of the church and parents to be disciple-makers of their children.

POMS functions simultaneously with Middle School Ministry, the weekly Sunday ministry for middle school students. *POMS* will operate as a four-part, eight-week class (See Table 1). This would be comprised of five main practices as modeled by the following acronym which echoes the metaphor used throughout this paper (BUILD):

Building Friendships: Mentors model parents' ways of discipleship.

Understanding: Parents and mentors work together to practice discipleship methods.

Implementing: Parents apply what they have learned to case studies.

Leading: Parents lead their students in what they have learned through an immersive discipleship experience.

Developing: Upon completion of the program, participants receive quarterly resources for continued discipleship-development via email.

Both parents, such as Chris and Lori, are welcomed and expected to participate in *POMS*, if applicable.⁹³ While the students continue with their regularly scheduled programming, instead of parents dropping their kids off and then going back home, parents will come into MSM with their children. In this case, Chris and Lori will join Nora in the opening time of fellowship and then split to their respective ministries.

⁹³ *POMS* recognizes and is sensitive to the increasing numbers of single parents but encourages those couples which remain intact to attend together. Legal guardians and grandparents are also welcome to attend.

Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
<i>Building Friendships:</i> Introductions and testimonies	<i>Building Friendships:</i> Testimonies contd. and Goal Setting	<i>Understanding:</i> What does Scripture say?	<i>Understanding:</i> How do I do this?
Week 5	Week 6	Week 7	Week 8
<i>Implementing:</i> Scripture Engagement Outbreak Groups	<i>Implementing:</i> Discipleship Case Studies	<i>Leading:</i> Child and Parent Scripture Engagement Practice	<i>Leading:</i> Celebration of completion!

Table 1: Tentative Programmatic Schedule of POMS

The first two weeks of the *POMS* experience will partner Chris and Lori with older “parent-partners” or “spiritual friends” for small group-like sessions. The next two weeks will be formatted as a formal class or seminar and the next two weeks Chris and Lori will participate in case studies, building upon what they have learned so far. The class will be capped with two weeks of immersive discipleship experiences where they lead Nora through what they have learned. Finally, Chris and Lori will receive continual resources and opportunities quarterly to continue to develop as disciple makers.

Practice 1: Buddying

One of the major excellences anticipated through participation in *POMS*, as established in Box C, is communion with God and others. *POMS* fosters opportunities for parents to connect not only with each other, but with other parents as well—both those in similar life stages to them and those a few stages ahead. Therefore, the first two weeks of *POMS* are designed in a small group-like manner for parents to be in communion with one another. Each small group will be paired with parent-partners who are seasoned and experienced in discipling their own children. Ideally, these are parents who are empty nesters or have older children who have successfully

been disciplined.⁹⁴ For example, Chris and Lori would be partnered with Joe and Peggy, sixty-year-old youth ministry volunteer veterans who have two adult children who are active participants of the ecclesial community. Bandura's Social Learning Theory, as described in depth in Box D, states that andragogy requires modeling, or to use the language of *POMS*, friendship. Buddying provides a model for Chris and Lori to refer to and learn from.

These small groups would include the parent-partners and the parent-teams (being the mother and father) to share their personal testimonies of parenting and to establish individual goals from such a program. In these two weeks, parents will develop a sense of belonging and comfortability within the group of peers and gain mentors for the struggles that come with parenting. Chris and Lori would feel comfortable with their peers and with Joe and Peggy as a result of the buddying program. This will also allow parents to have compassion (Box C) for their children and for others as they share their testimonies and goals. Diana Garland explains that all families "have the capability to provide support to others as well as the need to receive it."⁹⁵ Each family unit has something different and beneficial to contribute to these small groups. These small groups will function similar to support groups.⁹⁶

Practice 2: Understanding

Research led by Timothy Jones reported that most parents are not consistently engaged in any intentional processes of discipleship with their children.⁹⁷ Parents who are invested in the church are typically not unaware of their divine responsibility to nurture their children

⁹⁴ By "successfully" we mean the children continue to participate in the church and profess their faith and have begun discipling others.

⁹⁵ Diana R Garland, *Family Ministry: A Comprehensive Guide*, Second (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 554.

⁹⁶ Garland, 555.

⁹⁷ Timothy Paul Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide: How Your Church Can Equip Parents to Make Disciples* (Indianapolis, IN, 2011), 112.

spiritually. These parents have not been given opportunities to have explicit training in discipling their children. The practice of “understanding” provides the space and resources for leading parents into discipleship competency. Jones reports that of a surveyed group of parents, 52% report that they felt incapable of discipling their children because of a lack of training and time dedicated to the matter. Twenty-eight percent attributed a lack of training alone and 10% attributed a lack of time alone to the cause of neglect of discipleship. This amounts to 90% of parents being disengaged from discipling their children domestically.⁹⁸ Chris and Lori must be competent in discipleship tactics for the sake of Nora, as defined by Box C’s excellency of competency.

This “understanding” program seeks to provide family units with knowledge, values, and skills that will help family members understand one another better and develop the patterns and processes of spiritual formation in the lives of their children, namely discipleship. This will be facilitated through promptings and occasional formal instruction by the expert leader, or parent-partners, but will primarily be led by the group discussion. Malcom Knowles’ Adult Learning Theory attests to the effectiveness of adults leading themselves in learning. Group-based learning such as this allows for more engagement with one another, and confidence in themselves and their ability to learn and lead as is one of the excellences of Box C--confidence.⁹⁹ Learning within group settings would also allow for Box C’s excellency to grow in communion with one another.

⁹⁸ Timothy Paul Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide: How Your Church Can Equip Parents to Make Disciples* (Indianapolis, IN, 2011), 111.

⁹⁹ Garland, 572.

Practice 3: Implementing

To solidify the competency of the participants of *POMS* and instill confidence in their abilities (Box C), parents will implement what they learned through case studies of discipleship to put into practice what they have learned. Action leads to insight more than insight leads to action. Therefore, it is imperative that Chris and Lori put their newfound insights from the previous four weeks into action. One of the andragogical assumptions of Knowles' learning theory states that adults look for immediate applications of their learning and so become more problem centered than subject centered.¹⁰⁰ By implementing the subject centered content learned in the understanding program into a problem based case study, Chris and Lori will be able to engage with the content in a way that intrinsically motivates them to commit to discipling Nora as envisioned as an excellency in Box C.

Programmatically, the practice of implementing would involve the small groups of parents, from buddying, to work in communion on case studies, then present their solutions and questions to their partner-parents and the remainder of their peers. Throughout the gospel accounts Jesus teaches on a plethora of topics through parables which act as case studies of sorts. He uses these case studies for the disciples to learn how to link theory and practice and to gain different perspectives, just as Chris and Lori need to. Case studies provide space for learner-centered education which allows space for dialogue from different perspectives and creativity amongst adults.¹⁰¹ By working through such experiential examples, Chris and Lori can link the theory and practice which they will use while discipling Nora.

¹⁰⁰ Malcom Knowles, *The Modern Practice of Adult Education*, Revised (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Cambridge Adult Education, 1980). 43.

¹⁰¹ Steven Argue, "Rethinking Church Strategies and Structures," in *Adoptive Youth Ministry: Integrating Emerging Generations into the Family of Faith*, ed. Chap Clark (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016), 324.

Practice 4: Leading

To cap off the eight weeks, parents will put into action all that they have learned by practicing communion with their child(ren), as discussed in Box C, and demonstrate discipleship tactics. Parents will participate in immersive discipleship experiences within the confines of the church and alongside their parent-partners for guidance. This program allows for Chris and Lori to express their rich reservoir of experience, as noted of importance in Box D, and become “the modeler.” Bandura’s learning theory as discussed in Box D expects learners to take the model and “do it” or become the modeler themselves. The process of becoming the modeler allows Chris and Lori to showcase their compassion for Nora by being in communion with her, through expressing their competency of and commitment to her through their confidence to model discipleship (which accomplishes all the excellences discussed in Box C).

An example of an immersive discipleship experience would be Chris and Lori leading a debrief discussion with Nora over the MSM sermon of the night or walking Nora through Scripture Engagement techniques such as journaling Scripture or engaging Scripture through storying with her. These two weeks will include times of corporate worship where Chris and Lori will be able to engage Scripture through music with Nora. In this way, Chris and Lori are given a safe environment to experiment in leading Nora in her spiritual formation.¹⁰² If they need assistance or further instruction, they have both the guidance of their peers and their parent-partners, Joe and Peggy. Jones advocates for the danger of making family ministry solely activity driven. By using the leading practice as the capstone of *POMS*, parents are able to use this not as a one-off activity, but rather a practice round for a lifestyle of discipling their child domestically. Jones found that churches who partner with parents beyond the one-off activities, such as *POMS*,

¹⁰² Garland, *Family Ministry: A Comprehensive Guide*, 574.

not only equip parents such as Chris and Lori but successfully mobilize them into being effective and efficient disciple-makers.¹⁰³

Practice 5: Developing

Partnering with parents is not a one-time event or program. Because partnering with parents is not a one-time event or program, the partnership of UALC with parents does not end upon graduation from *POMS*. In fact, this is only the beginning of partnering with parents. This “developing” phase speaks to the commitment excellency as defined in Box C. Making disciples demands a commitment that perhaps differs from the secular world. This commitment requires us to put God first and continually choose to invest in our spiritual development.¹⁰⁴ Therefore *POMS* will send out quarterly developing digests to perpetually invest in family discipleship. Developing digests act as professional development does in the workforce—these are resources which are available and suggested for those who wish to continue developing, growing, or improving in their ability to disciple.

Parents and church alike should be committed to the discipleship of students for more than eight weeks. *POMS* commences a lifelong initiative to partner with parents through the discipleship of their children. “Developing” provides parents with resources quarterly whether that be recommendations of books, podcasts, or workshops to continue to develop into the disciple makers as they were divinely called. These resources will include a quick article or video which discusses a major topic of concern for their students as recommended by Barna.¹⁰⁵ For example, it may be an informational blurb on sexting or bullying as it pertains to adolescents, or it could walk parents through talking to their students about the apostle’s creed. Churches

¹⁰³ Jones, *Family Ministry Field Guide: How Your Church Can Equip Parents to Make Disciples*, 113.

¹⁰⁴ Arthur David Canales, *Models and Methods for Youth and Young Adult Ministry: Ecumenical Examples and Pastoral Approaches for the Christian Church* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2018), 125.

¹⁰⁵ George Barna, *Revolutionary Parenting* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2007), 48.

must take advantage of formal education processes, but also the informal, casual opportunities such as these quarterly developing digests to equip parents and disciple their children.¹⁰⁶

Finally, this ministry invites parent-teams to communicate and evaluate their spiritual leadership in the lives of their children. Parents-teams will be provided with reflection questions in these quarterly developing digests to evaluate and assess their engagement with the discipleship of their child(ren). As parents commit to and have confidence in their discipleship capabilities, they should evaluate and assess their performance, or lack thereof. *POMS* is committed to holding parents accountable to the discipleship of their children and walking alongside the family unit through the process.

Conclusion

The final part of building this ministry is nailing the pieces together. The implications of the first four boxes of the Frankena model led to the acronym of practices, BUILD. Each practice relates to the excellences and processes required of a ministry to equip and mobilize parents of middle schoolers. The practices which best build *POMS* are buddying, understanding, implementing, leading, and developing. Through this careful but gratifying process of constructing a ministry, parents of middle schoolers are properly equipped and mobilized to disciple their children.

¹⁰⁶ Jay Sedwick, "Teaching for Adoptive Ministry," in *Adoptive Youth Ministry: Integrating Emerging Generations into the Family of Faith*, ed. Chap Clark (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016), 309.

Conclusion: The House God is Building

This paper has constructed a philosophy of ministry for parent ministry with an emphasis on discipleship. Parents are presently facing a pandemic of feeling underequipped. Parents will continue to experience such a pandemic if this goes untreated. The church is charged with the duty to co-champion the responsibility of discipling children alongside their parents. As it serves a ministry well to equip participants, they must also be mobilized. Ephesians 4:11-16 implores the church to equip the saints, in this case being parents, so that they build up the body of Christ. The two verbs of note, equip and build, have been emphasized in the programmatic structure of *POMS*.

POMS is one solution to this pandemic. It is one avenue of taking on this responsibility. The practices outlined above transpire from philosophical, theoretical, and practical roots, and as such provide an exemplar framework for parent discipleship ministry. Though the structure of the ministry is directly conducive for the context of UALC, it is built to be replicated and adapted to other local church contexts. After all, the local church, not just UALC, must make disciples who make disciples.

This paper served as a philosophy of ministry which equips and mobilizes parents and guardians of middle schoolers to be catalysts in the spiritual formation of their middle schoolers. If nothing else, may this paper have convinced you of the necessity to draw near to God no matter the age or stage of life. We are called to be in relationship with God and help others do the same. As Paul exhorts in 2 Peter 3, may you continue to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To God be the glory.

Bibliography

- Allender, Dan B. *How Children Raise Parents*. Colorado Springs, CO: WaterBrook Press, 2003.
- Anizor, Uche, Rob Price, and Hank Voss. *Evangelical Theology*. New York, NY: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2021.
- Anthony, Michael, and Michelle Anthony. *A Theology for Family Ministries*, n.d.
- Argue, Steven. "Rethinking Church Strategies and Structures." In *Adoptive Youth Ministry: Integrating Emerging Generations into the Family of Faith*, edited by Chap Clark. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016.
- Bandura, Albert. *Social Learning Theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1977.
- Barlow, Daniel L. *Educational Psychology: The Teaching-Learning Process*. Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1985.
- Barna, George. *Revolutionary Parenting*. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2007.
- Blanchette Jr., Leon M. "Ministry with Children." In *Christian Education: A Guide to the Foundations of Ministry*, edited by Freddy Cardoza. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2019.
- Borgman, Dean. *Foundations for Youth Ministry: Theological Engagement with Teen Life and Culture*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013.
- Calhoun, Adele Ahlberg. *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices That Transform Us*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005.
- Canales, Arthur David. *Models and Methods for Youth and Young Adult Ministry: Ecumenical Examples and Pastoral Approaches for the Christian Church*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2018.
- Dearborn, K. L. "Image of God." In *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, edited by Daniel Treier and Walter Elwell, 3rd ed., 415–17. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017.
- DeVries, Mark. *Sustainable Youth Ministry: Why Most Youth Ministry Doesn't Last and What Your Church Can Do About It*. IVP Books, 2008.
- Downs, Perry G. *Teaching for Spiritual Growth: An Introduction to Christian Education*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994.

- Dunn, Richard R. *Shaping the Spiritual Life of Students: A Guide for Youth Workers, Pastors, Teachers Campus Ministers*. InterVarsity Press, 2001.
- Dunn, Richard, and Mark Senter II. *Reaching a Generation for Christ: A Comprehensive Guide to Youth Ministry*. Second. Moody Press, 1997.
- Espelage, Dorothy L., Kris Bosworth, and Thomas R. Simon. "Examining the Social Context of Bullying Behaviors in Early Adolescence." *Journal of Counseling and Development* 78 (2000): 326–33.
- Flores, Vanessa A. "Family Fuel: The Church Partnering with Parents in the Spiritual Formation of Children and Family." *Selected Honors Theses* 113 (2020).
- Garland, Diana R. *Family Ministry: A Comprehensive Guide*. Second. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012.
- Geivett, R. D. "Knowledge, God Of." In *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, edited by Daniel J. Treier and Walter A. Elwell, 471. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017.
- Geivett, R.D. "Knowledge." In *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, edited by Daniel J. Trier. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017.
- Glassford, Darwin K. "Philosophy of Ministry." In *Evangelical Dictionary of Christian Education*, edited by Michael Anthony. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2001.
- Grenz, Stanley J. *Created for Community: Connecting Christian Belief with Christian Living*. Second. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 1996.
- Grenz, Stephen J. *Theology for the Community of God*. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994.
- Guinness, Os. *The Call: Finding and Fulfilling the Central Purpose of Your Life*. Nashville: Word Publishing, 1998. <http://catdir.loc.gov/catdir/enhancements/fy0609/97052654-d.html>.
- Harrison, R. K. "Scripture." In *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 790. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017.
- Hattie, John. *Visible Learning for Teachers: Maximizing Impact on Learning*. New York, NY: Routledge, 2012.
- Issler, Klaus, and Ronald Habermas. *How We Learn: A Christian Teacher's Guide to Educational Psychology*. Eugene, OR: Resource Publications, 1994.

- Jethani, Skye. *With: Reimagining the Way You Related to God*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2011.
- Jones, Timothy Paul. *Family Ministry Field Guide: How Your Church Can Equip Parents to Make Disciples*. Indianapolis, IN: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2011.
- Knowles, Malcom. *The Modern Practice of Adult Education*. Revised and Updated. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Cambridge Adult Education, 1980.
- Kurian, George Thomas. "Communion of the Saints." In *Encyclopedia of Christian Education*, Two:317. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2015.
- Lewis, C. S. (Clive Staples). *Letters to Malcom: Chiefly on Prayer--Reflections on the Intimate Dialogue Between Man and God*. New York, NY: First Mariner Books, 1964.
- Malphurs, Aubrey. *Strategic Disciple Making: A Practical Tool for Disciple Making*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2009.
- McDonald, H.D. "Word, Word of God, Word of the Lord." In *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, 945–46. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017.
- McKnight, Scot, and Laura Barringer. *A Church Called Tov: Forming a Goodness Culture That Resists Abuses of Power and Promotes Healing*. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2020.
- Merriam, Sharan B., and Laura L. Bierema. *Adulting Learning: Linking Theory and Practice*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2014.
- Mike, Severe. "Axioms of Youth Ministry." Presented at the Ministry to Youth, Taylor University, 2021.
- Newton, Gary C. "Philosophy of Christian Education." In *Evangelical Dictionary of Christian Education*, edited by Michael Anthony, 533–34. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2001.
- Oestreicher, Mark, and Scott Rubin. *Middle School Ministry: A Comprehensive Guide to Working with Early Adolescents*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009.
- Osborn, L. H. "Creation." In *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology*, edited by T. Desmond Alexander, Brian S. Rosner, D. A. Carson, and Graeme Goldsworthy, 434–35. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000.
- Packer, J. I. "Faith." In *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, edited by Daniel Treier and Walter A. Elwell, 304. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2017.

- Parrett, Gary A., and Steve Kang. *Teaching the Faith, Forming the Faithful: A Biblical Vision for Education in the Church*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009.
- Powell, Kara, and Chap Clark. *Sticky Faith: Everyday Ideas to Build Lasting Faith in Your Kids*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011.
- Robbins, Duffy. *This Way to Youth Ministry: An Introduction to the Adventure*. Harper Collins, 2004.
- Rooms, Nigel. "Malcom Knowles." In *Encyclopedia of Christian Education*, 686. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015.
- Sedwick, Jay. "Teaching for Adoptive Ministry." In *Adoptive Youth Ministry: Integrating Emerging Generations into the Family of Faith*, edited by Chap Clark. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016.
- Sidjabat, Binsen Samuel. "Parents as Teachers." In *Encyclopedia of Christian Education*. Vol. 2. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2015.
- Spurgeon, Charles. "Heart Knowledge of God." Sermon, Newington, December 6, 1874.
- Stevens, Daniel C. "Frankena, William Klaus." In *Evangelical Dictionary of Christian Education*, edited by Michael Anthony, 301–2. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2001.
- Strommen, Merton P., and Richard A. Hardel. *Passing on the Faith: A Radical New Model For Youth and Family Ministry*. Winona, MN: Youth and Family Institute of Augsburg College, 2000.
- Tozer, A.W. *Tozer Speaks*. Edited by Aiden Wilson. Vol. 1. Camp Hill, PN: Wingspread Publishers, 1994.
- Trebesch, Shelley. "Adult Learning." In *Encyclopedia of Christian Education*, 15–16. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015.
- Treier, Daniel J. *Introducing Evangelical Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2019.
- UALC. "About UALC: Oasis," 2023. <https://www.ualc.org/about>.
- Willhauck, Susan. "Abraham Maslow." In *Encyclopedia of Christian Education*. Vol. 2. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2015.
- Yount, William R. *Created to Learn: A Christian Teacher's Introduction to Educational Psychology*. Second. Nashville, TN: B & H Academic, 2010.

Zuck, Roy B. *Spirit-Filled Teaching: The Power of the Holy Spirit in Your Ministry*. Nashville, TN: Word Publishing, 1998.