

Foundational Framework
UPH FACULTY OF PSYCHOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

UPH PSYCHOLOGY PROGRAM

The UPH Psychology program aims to equip students and graduates with a biblical and psychological understanding of persons in accordance with the mission and guiding theological framework of UPH and the Pelita Harapan Educational Foundation. To this end, the UPH Psychology program is itself grounded in and shaped by that same mission and guiding theological framework, and seeks to understand and promote psychology in the light of the Holy Scriptures, the convictions of Reformed theology, and the preeminence of Jesus Christ in all things.

Specifically this means that biblical, Reformed theology -- grounded in the Holy Scriptures, dependent on our sovereign and gracious God, and centered in the person and work of Jesus Christ -- is the starting-point, the guiding conviction, and the ultimate evaluative framework for the UPH Psychology program. This theology is foundational and primary, such that, even as the program enables earnest and honest exploration of the vast array of psychological sub-disciplines, theories, and practices, all teaching and scholarship will finally be governed by this theological understanding.

This theological understanding presupposes the fact that all human thinking, including psychology, is rooted in worldview. There is no such thing as religiously “neutral” or purely “objective” thought, and every theory or practice in psychology gives evidence, explicitly or implicitly, of its underlying worldview. The framework articulated below is presented in the interest of transparency and accountability regarding the worldview that undergirds and motivates the study of psychology at UPH.

The UPH Psychology program is committed to the authority and sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures, which are the words of God written, and to the expression of the truth of the Scriptures in the tenets of Reformed theology. On this basis, the study of psychology at UPH is rooted in the conviction that each person is created in the image of God, but has fallen into sin and can only be completely restored through redemption in Christ

Recognizing the broad range of sub-disciplines within the field of psychology, we recognize that the import and impact of this theological framework will vary somewhat across the sub-disciplines. However, we also affirm that, as the theological framework addresses the most basic and pervasive foundations of all understanding, every sub-discipline will, in important ways, be framed and informed by our theological convictions.

Based on the theological framework of the YPPH/YUPH Statement of Faith, teaching of psychology as a science in UPH is meant:

- 1. For General Education** (*non-psychology students*) – to develop individuals who are professional and mature, both spiritually and mentally, and able to play a role as professionals in their respective field who display Christian values in every aspect of their lives
- 2. For the Major Field** – to produce psychologists who are grounded professionally and personally in God’s truth as revealed in Holy Scripture, and who depend totally on God’s sovereignty and God’s way in their life transformation. The ultimate aim is that they would become Christ-like themselves, leaning not on their own strength and self-sufficiency, but faithfully applying their biblically-grounded psychological knowledge for the good of others and for the glory of God.

Foundational Framework

In the broader academic community, psychology as a science of mind, brain, and behavior is commonly based on principles and methods that ignore the existence of God and the truth that he has revealed in Holy Scripture, assuming that human beings can understand the range of psychology’s topics and address human behavior independently of God and his Word. In contrast, UPH’s understanding of Christ-centered psychology, rooted in Reformed tradition and biblical worldview, serves as a foundational framework on which to build psychological understanding that is Christ-centered.

Four (4) key components in developing a Christ-centered psychology foundational framework are:

1. Statement of faith (See YPPH/YUPH Statement of Faith)
2. Biblical foundation
3. Key principles
4. Key diagnostic questions

Biblical Foundation:

The authority and sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures are the foundation and framework on which we build, in order that we might know and love God, and thereby understand and love others as we ought. To know and love God, we need the grace of God, for in our nature human beings are sinful and separated from God. The same is true as we seek to know and serve others.

Psychology as a science utilizes empirical and experimental methods to enable us to understand mind, brain, and behavior. However, because of the fall, human beings do not want to accept either God's sovereignty and authority or their own fallenness, but always seek their own good in rebellion against God. Because of this, our basic rebellion and sinfulness always affect our human application of psychology's empirical and experimental methods, distorting our apprehension of human reality as known by God. At its worst, secular psychology produces yet more rebellion and sinfulness. In contrast, grounding the science of psychology in a biblical framework enables recognition of human sinfulness and its consequences and the possibilities, by God's grace, of turning away from sin to holiness and wholeness. Hence, psychology cannot be separated from theology.

Key Principles:

Human nature must be observed from the biblical perspective of creation-fall-redemption-consummation. Human beings are the peak of God's creation, created in the likeness and image of the Triune God, the creatures valued and loved most highly by God, but also creatures who have fallen into sin so that every aspect of human thought and experience is corrupted by our spiritual and moral depravity. Therefore human beings should be observed and understood holistically in biblical perspective and cannot be treated in a naturalistic and reductionist manner. Human beings also need salvation from God through Jesus Christ and will achieve perfect wholeness and holiness only when Jesus Christ comes for the second time.

The science and theories of psychology, including those that are grounded in unbiblical worldviews, can provide partial insight into the human condition and psychological disorders. This is the blessing of God's common grace. But to the degree that those theories fail to take into account biblical truth, they fail to give a fully accurate and beneficial framework for both understanding and practice. The task of biblically-grounded psychology is to understand the panoply of theories, and the empirical, observational and clinical findings that flow from them, in the light of the Scriptures and the gospel of Jesus Christ, and thus "redeem" whatever is true and worthy and reject what is false and harmful. A further task for our psychologists, thoroughly grounded in a biblical worldview and engaged with the theories and findings of contemporary psychology, is to contribute to the scientific and professional progress of the field, functioning as godly and competent professionals seeking to serve the well-being of others, for the ultimate purpose of the glory of Jesus Christ and salvation through his gospel.

Human transformation to become more like Christ.

Human transformation to become more like Christ cannot be achieved through human understanding and effort, but rather is accomplished only by the work of Christ in his death on the cross and triumph over death in his resurrection, and by the work of the Holy Spirit who regenerates and sanctifies

human beings. As new creations, redeemed Christian people will have the deepest capacity to be honest and open to what is real and true, without need for distortion. Only then will they be on the path to true and eternal wholeness. Christian psychology can be a useful tool to assist growing Christians in the process of their sanctification as they shake off the effects of persistent sin and grow in Christ.

In its application to those who are not believers, Christian psychology has the opportunity to diminish some aspects of human suffering and contribute to the public well-being, even if such interventions do not address their deepest disorder and dysfunction, which is sinfulness and rebellion against God. For the Christian psychologist, such interventions will, in God's providence, lead to pathways of witness regarding God's solution for sin and rebellion in the gospel of his Son.

Thus, framed by biblical truth and the gospel, psychology can be useful in diminishing suffering and the public impact of evil on society, and as an instrument of gospel regeneration and sanctification.

Key Diagnostic Questions

Creation

- Are human beings viewed as the peak of God's creation, created in the likeness and image of the Triune God, or viewed in a naturalistic psychological way?
- How does the biblical doctrine of creation, as against materialistic, naturalistic, or evolutionary doctrines, provide true and dependable starting-points and guides for psychology? What are the dangers of grounding psychology in any other starting-point?

The purpose of human beings

- Is human beings' ultimate end in life to love God and to glorify Him forever "so that God may be all in all," or to attain only temporal satisfaction or well-being as conceptualized in various branches of contemporary secular psychology?
- How does the fact that human beings are created "in the image of God" inform and transform our psychological understanding?

Fall

- Is mankind to be viewed as a fallen image-bearer in accord with the Biblical concept, or are people to be seen as morally neutral biological organisms (naturalistic psychology) or fundamentally good (humanistic psychology)?

- How does the reality of universal human sinfulness, rooted in rebellion against God, inform our understanding of psychology? What does the reality of sin imply for our consideration of various theories of the roots of psychological disorders and their solutions?

Psychopathology

- Is there a biblical framework for our understanding of psychopathology, or not?
Apart from the biblical framework, psychology cannot give a satisfactory description or explanation of the causes of psychopathology. In contrast the biblical framework requires that we understand human mental health problems in terms of one or more of the three following factors:
 - People are sinful and thus have the tendency towards sin and abnormality from birth.
 - People sin intentionally.
 - People are impacted by the sins of others or by a sinful environment.

Human Interaction with Spiritual Realities

- Does our psychological understanding include the possibility that Satan and demonic spirits contribute to some problematic human behavior?
- How does the person of Satan factor into our theories and practices in psychology?
Satan and his demons are real and they are the enemies of God. Demons were defeated by Christ with His death and resurrection. However, demons are still at work in this world. They try to deceive people and to persuade people to move away from the Truth.

Redemption

Mental health

- Is it sufficient to look at mental health from the viewpoint of harmonious relationships (with oneself, other people and the environment), or is a deep and dynamic relationship with one's Creator and Savior necessary to any ultimate understanding of mental health?
- Can a person achieve optimal mental health by his own efforts, or is God's intervention needed?

Personal Transformation

- Is self-knowledge adequate for the restoration of mental health, or is the Holy Spirit needed for regeneration and progressive sanctification?
- How do saving grace and regeneration for sinners factor into our theories and practices in psychology?
- What roles does the Bible's call to obedience and holiness play in the theories and practices of psychology?

Psychotherapy

- How does our understanding of the omnipresence of God and the pervasive work of the Holy Spirit ground and shape our understanding of the counseling process?
- In what ways and under what circumstances should the presence and power of the Holy Spirit be explicitly invoked?
- Under what circumstances is it appropriate for counseling to focus on helping people overcome their problems without explicit attention to biblical truth and the gospel, and under what circumstances is it appropriate directly to address sin, the need for God's saving work, and God's ultimate purpose for human beings?
- What is the ultimate goal of psychology rooted in the Scriptures and the gospel and preeminence of Jesus Christ? How do theories and practices of psychology satisfactorily represent these biblical realities? Under what circumstances is the pursuit of goals short of that ultimate goal appropriate?
- How does our understanding of every person's eternal destiny inform theories and practices of psychology?

The role of suffering

- Is suffering to be seen only as something to be eliminated because it prevents people from being happy, or can suffering sometimes be viewed as one of the Lord's means for bringing people back to himself?
- How can the Christian psychologist be appropriately led by biblical truth and the leading of the Holy Spirit to discern God's intended work in suffering?