Development on Purpose
Instructor Resources

Chapter Two: A Theological Model for Understanding HBSE

Connection to the 2015 EPAS of the CSWE

This chapter may be used to explore the following EPAS core competencies:

Competency 7: Assess Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

In identifying a purpose for development, social workers have a standard by which to assess clients and constituencies.

Competency 8: Intervene with Individuals, Families, Groups, Organizations, and Communities

In identifying a purpose for development, social workers are better equipped about HBSE and interventions to explore with clients and constituencies.

Key Concepts and Terms

This chapter offers a basic model for understanding HBSE. The model contains some abstract principles which may be challenging for some students, but encouraging students to think abstractly can also stretch their thinking and contribute to growth.

> The ultimate goal of human development is secure relationships with God, other people, and all of creation.

The model suggests that one of the key challenges with developmental theories is that, although helpful, they often do not point to an ultimate goal or purpose. And they do not point to one, unified purpose.

It is helpful to identify the God-ordained purpose for our development as such a purpose can guide many of our activities in social work. The chapter suggests this purpose as **secure relationships with God, other people, and all of creation**. "Creation" can be thought of as the "environment" of HBSE. While this goal is broad, it can guide our work with clients or systems. If we seek to improve the lives of those with whom we work, we ought to ask ourselves if our efforts are nudging individuals, groups, and communities toward improved relationships with God, themselves, others, and their environment.

The model describes "secure relationships" as those that facilitate shalom or human flourishing. The chapter also points to the Trinity as the ideal model of secure relationships—one in which all

three members are fully connected and unified, yet simultaneously individual and separate. So "secure relationships" can be said to be characterized by three things: they facilitate shalom, they highlight individuality, and they highlight interdependence. So the goal is right relationships and "right" relationships are characterized by an individual (or group or community) growing in shalom, living more deeply into the persons they were created to be, and drawing closer to others in love.

Much (many all!) of social work falls within these boundaries. Social workers help individuals to see themselves more accurately. Help communities to be places of shalom for all their inhabits. Or advocate for policies that uphold principles of shalom. In doing so,

> **Teleology**—a branch of philosophy that deals with ultimate ends and refers to the idea that there is purpose or finality in the world or a telos. Teleology suggests that there is an overarching, divine purpose that provides guidance and meaning for life.
>
> **Shalom**—a Hebrew word that is often translated as "peace." Shalom is a rich concept that implies completely right relationships with a holistic sense of completeness, harmony, and fullness.

Discussion Questions

1. Imagine you are the director of a residential treatment center for adolescents struggling with severe mental health issues. What characteristics would you encourage within the facility so that all of the adolescents have opportunities to flourish? What policies would you adopt to support your goals?

2. That chapter indicates that growth on both the individual and corporate levels are important. How does this principle apply to a local church? Does your local church emphasize growth in one way over another? If so, ponder why this is the case.

3. How do we actually grow spiritually or in our relationship with God? What actions, if any, are required on *our* part?

4. The chapter suggests that we grow as individuals when we grow toward God? This seems like a paradox; how does it work?

Class Activities and Assignment Ideas

1. In small groups, make a list of characteristics of relationships of shalom within an organization. Think about the rationale for each of your choices; consider how each of your characteristics would enable employees to flourish.

2. Divide into small groups and give each person an index card. Ask them to each write down their answer to the following question and then to compile a group list.

> If you consider a relationship like a close friendship or marriage, what are some of the characteristics or relationships that are important to facilitate shalom? Examples might include unconditional love, honesty about expectations, respect for and acceptance of the other person (and their differences), mutual giving and taking, confession, and forgiveness.

3. As an assignment, ask students to write a 3-4 page paper identifying a local environment (neighborhood/town/city) that does *not* currently or adequately facilitate shalom for all of its persons or groups (e.g., recent immigrants or homeless individuals). Keeping the chapter's model in mind, what interventions are needed in that community to allow all persons or groups to develop as God intends.

4. Related to Question One from the Discussion Section above, ask students to prepare a 10-minute video in which they "advertise" their residential treatment center for adolescents. The video should address questions such as:

- o   What programs will the facility have and why?
- o   What type of change can parents expect from their child's participation?
- o   What characteristics will be sought after in selecting employees?
- o   What policies will be in place?
- o   What will the facility offer in terms of other amenities?

5. Play this three-minute clip from the movie, "*The Tree of Life*," which includes a voiceover of the film's young mother. The clip is entitled "the way of nature and the way of grace." It's a paraphrase of sorts of the I Corinthians 13 description of love. Later in the film, the same mother says, "The only way to be happy is to love." How does this quote and the reflections in this scene inform the goals of social work?

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z28Mi6mUyKo

6. Divide students into small groups and ask them to develop a slogan for social work that encompasses concepts from this chapter.