

# UNDERSTANDING THE INFLUENCES OF NATURE AND NURTURE

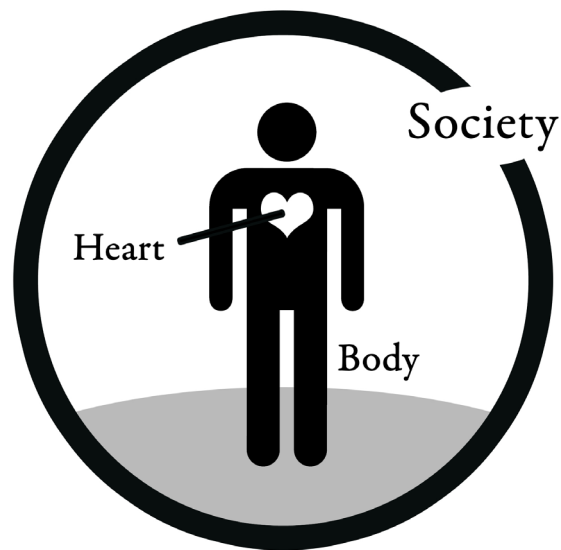
## Introduction

- A. What is wrong with Connie?
- B. To what extent does our body (nature) and relationships (nurture) affect our hearts?
- C. My growth in understanding of the influences on the human heart.

## Understanding Human Nature

- A. We are duplex creatures – our inner self is embodied. *Gen 2:7; 2 Cor 4:16; 5:8; Phil 2:3; Matt 22:32; Rev 6:10*
  - 1. The inner person – referred to as the heart, soul, mind, spirit. *Deut 6:5; Heb 4:12*
  - 2. The outer person – the body (including the brain).
  - 3. Secular materialism denies the existence of the soul.

B. We exist in the context of society – we are socially embedded duplex creatures.



### Understanding How Your Outer Self (Nature/Body) Influences Your Heart

A. Both your inner person and your outward person are affected by the Fall. *Rom 8:7-8, 20-23, 6:23;*

*1 Cor 2:14*

1. Our bodies experience weakness, which is not sinful. *Matt 26:40; John 9:1ff*

2. Some bodily weaknesses are temporary, while others are lifelong.

B. Your inner self influences the body. *Ps 38:1-8; Prov 17:22; 14:30; Luke 6:43-44*

1. Sin often has physical effects. *Ps 32:3-4*

2. Your body reflects your heart – facial expression, tone of voice, pulse, etc.

3. The inner person of a Christian keeps the flesh under control. *Rom 6:11-13*

4. The body carries out the desires of the heart. *Luke 6:45; Col 1:21; 2 Cor 5:10*

C. Your body influences your inner person.

1. What happens in the body can affect you spiritually. *Job 2:4-6*

2. Bodily trials and weakness (including brain issues) may increase temptation.

D. Your body can never cause your heart to sin. Genetics are not determinative.

1. Sin comes from within. *Mark 7:14-23; Jas 1:13-15*

2. God will not allow an external temptation greater than we can bear. *1 Cor 10:13*

3. The inner self chooses how to respond to bodily temptation. *Prov 4:20-23*

E. Things to keep in mind when counseling.

1. Bodily issues should not be ignored, but compassionately understood.
  2. Distinguish between bodily weakness (including brain malfunction) and sin.
  3. The opinion of a medical doctor may be helpful.
  4. You may need to learn about Alzheimer's, dementia, brain injury, stroke, schizophrenia, autism (Asperger's), bi-polar, etc.
  5. When in doubt, assume the best. *1 Cor 13:7*
  6. People with brain injury or weakness may need to humbly accept their limitations and learn to trust God and those who love them. *Prov 3:5-6*
- F. Encouraging people who struggle with bodily weakness.
1. You are fearfully and wonderfully made. *Ps 139:13-16*
  2. God is sovereign over your bodily trials. *Job 2:1-8; John 9:3*
  3. Bodily weakness cannot hold you back from spiritual growth. *2 Cor 12:7-10*

4. Through Christ we can do all things to which God has called us in spite of physical limitations. *Phil 4:13; Prov. 20:12; Rom 6:17; 1 Cor 10:31*

5. One day we will have perfect bodies (including our brains). *Phil 3:20-21*

## Understanding How Your Social Context Affects Your Heart

A. God created us to be social creatures. *Gen 1:27-28; 2:18; Luke 10:29-37*

B. We live in a fallen world and are surrounded by many evil influences. *1 John 5:19*

1. Israel was warned against corrupt pagan neighbors. *Deut 7:1-4; 5:9-10; 18:9*

2. Proverbs warns us against foolish companions and the fear of man – peer pressure. *Prov 1:10ff; 13:20; 23:20-21; 29:25*

3. The New Testament contains similar warnings about the company you keep. *1 Cor 15:33; 2 Cor 6:14ff; Rom 12:1ff*

4. Some people are hurt by social influences which are beyond their control.

C. We also can be affected positively by those who are godly and wise. *Phil. 3:17; Luke 6:40; Acts 4:13; Heb 13:7; 6:12; Prov 13:20; 29:15; 6:4; John 13:15; 1 Pet 2:21*

D. Social influences are not determinative – the heart chooses. *Ezek 18:5-18*

1. We can reject good/wise influences. *Ezek 18:5-13; Matt 10:32-37; 1 Kgs 12:1ff*

2. We can overcome evil influences. *Ezek 18:14-18; 1 Pet 1:14-19; Eph 4:18ff*

E. Counseling people who deal with difficult social/relationship influences.

1. Relational experiences should not be ignored, but compassionately understood. *Rom 12:15; Prov 20:5*

2. Counselees cannot blame their sin on outside influences. *1 Cor 10:13; Mark 7:14ff*

3. Help counselees to biblically evaluate the influences in their lives and to take appropriate corrective steps (including overcoming the fear of man). *Prov 29:25*

4. One's relationship with God should be the primary influence in life. Those who trust Him will flourish in all circumstances. *Jer 17:5-8; Ps 27:10; Heb 13:5*

5. We can enjoy the blessed influence of God's people in the church community.

6. Learn from Joseph, who flourished despite his dysfunctional family. *Gen 37-50*

## Conclusion 2 Cor 4:7-10, 16-18

- A. Biblical counselors address the inner man using God's Word.
- B. While we reject both genetic determinism and social determinism, we recognize that the Bible teaches that both body and social environment influence the inner person.



### Books

Fitzpatrick, E. & Hendrickson, L., *Will Medicine Stop the Pain?*  
Welch, Ed, *Blame it on the Brain.*



### Supplemental Resources

Emler, Michael, "Understanding the Influences on the Human Heart," *Journal of Biblical Counseling* (Winter, 2002).