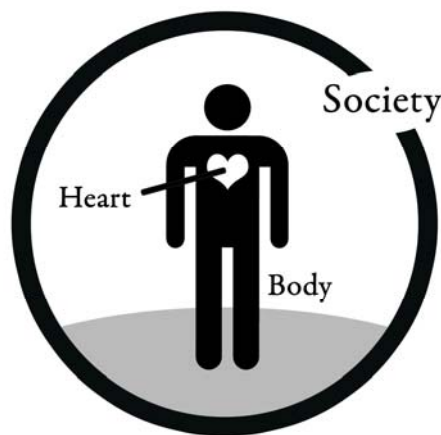


Caring for the Whole Person:
Understanding the Influences of Nature and Nurture in Counseling
Jim Newheiser

- I. Introduction.
 - A. What is wrong with Connie?
 - B. To what extent does our body (nature) and relationships (nurture) affect our hearts?
 - 1. Psychology used to emphasize nurture.
 - 2. Now more emphasis is being placed upon nature/genetics/biology.
 - 3. We do not believe in social determinism or genetic determinism.
 - 4. But the Bible teaches that we need to care for the whole person in light of what is going on in his/her life physically and socially.
- II. Understanding human nature – We are duplex creatures embedded in society.
 - A. We are duplex creatures – our inner self is embodied. Gen. 2:7 2 Co. 4:16 5:8 Phil. 2:3 Mt. 22:32 Rev. 6:10
 - 1. The inner person (referred to as the heart, soul, mind, spirit) thinks, remembers, feels, chooses, acts and interacts with God. Dt. 6:5 Heb. 4:12 Pr. 4:23 Ro. 2:15
 - 2. The outer person, the body (including the brain), carries out the desires of the heart/inner person. Luke 6:43-45 Rom. 6:11ff 2 Co. 5:10 Col. 1:21 1 Co. 9:24ff
 - 3. Secular materialists deny the existence of the soul which keeps them from truly understanding mankind and being able to offer the help that people need.
 - B. We exist in the context of society -- we are socially embedded duplex creatures.



- III. Understand how your outer self (nature/body) influences your heart.
 - A. Both your inner person and your outward person are affected by the Fall. Ro. 5:12 8:20-23,6-8 6:23 1 Co. 2:14 Gal. 5:17,19-21
 - 1. The desires of our hearts and the understanding of our minds are corrupted. Rom. 8:6-8

- 1 Co. 2:14 Gal. 5:17,19-21
 2. Our bodies, including our brains, experience weakness/sickness, which is not sinful. Mt. 26:40 Jo. 9:1ff Ro. 8:20-23
 3. Some bodily weaknesses are temporary, while others are long term or even lifelong. Mt. 26:40 6:28-32 John 5:1-5 9:1
 4. Body and soul will be temporarily separated by death, but at the resurrection they will be reunited in glory. Phil. 1:21 3:21 1 Jo. 3:1-2
- B. Your inner self influences the body. Ps. 38:1-8 Pr. 17:22 14:30 6:13 Luke 6:43-44**
1. Sin often has physical effects. Ps. 32:3-4
 2. Your body reflects your heart.
 3. The desires of the heart are carried out through the body. Luke 6:45 Col. 1:21 2 Co. 5:10 Mark 7:20-23
 4. The inner person of a Christian keeps the flesh under control. Rom. 6:11-13 Gal. 5:16ff 1 Co. 9:24-27
- 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 malfunctions) may make temptation more difficult.
- D. Your body can never *cause* your heart to sin. Js. 1:13**
1. The Bible steers us away from genetic (and all types of biological) determinism.
 2. We are moral beings who are accountable to God. Jer. 17:10 Ecc. 12:14 He. 4:12-13
 3. Sin comes from within (the heart). Mark 7:14-23 Js. 1:14-15
 4. While each of us may be, by nature, more tempted by certain sins, genetics are not determinative.
 5. God will not allow an external temptation greater than we can bear. 1 Co. 10:13 Romans 6:11-14
 6. The inner self chooses how to respond to bodily temptation. Pr. 4:20-23 Ro. 6:11ff
- E. Things to keep in mind when counseling people who struggle with bodily weaknesses.**
1. Bodily issues should not be ignored, but compassionately understood.
 2. Seek to distinguish between bodily weakness/sickness (including brain malfunction) and sin.
 3. The opinion of a medical doctor may be helpful.
 4. You need to learn about various brain issues.
 5. When in doubt, assume the best – charity. 1 Co. 13:7
 6. Whether or not there is a physical issue, there is always a spiritual issue.
 7. We as biblical counselors offer unique hope for those who struggle with bodily weakness.
 8. Counselees need help in responding biblically to the influences of their bodies.
 9. People with brain injury or weakness may need to humbly accept their limitations and learn to trust God and those who love them. Pr. 3:5-6
- F. Encouraging people who struggle with bodily weakness.**

1. You are fearfully and wonderfully made. Ps. 139:13-16 John 9:32
2. God is sovereign over your bodily trials and will not allow you to endure more than you can handle. Job 2:1-8 John 9:3 1 Co. 10:13
3. Bodily weakness cannot hold you back from spiritual growth. 2 Co. 12:7-10 Js. 1:2ff
4. Don't allow partial bodily weakness to keep you from doing what you can.
5. 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. 6:17,11-13 1 Co. 10:31
6. One day we will have perfect bodies (including our brains). Phil. 3:20-21

IV. Understand how your social context (nurture/environment) affects your heart.

- A. God created us to be social creatures. Gen. 1:27-28 2:18 Luke 10:29-37 Mt. 22:36ff
- B. We live in a fallen world and are surrounded by many evil influences. 1 Jo. 5:19
 1. Israel was warned against the influence of their corrupt pagan neighbors. Dt. 7:1-4,25-26 5:9-10 18:9
 2. Proverbs warns us against foolish companions and the fear of man – peer pressure. Pr. 1:10ff 13:20 23:20-21 29:25
 3. The New Testament contains similar warnings about the company you keep. 1 Co. 15:33 2 Co. 6:14ff Ro. 12:1
 4. Some people are hurt by social influences which are beyond their control.
 5. We are all from dysfunctional families in a sick society.
- C. We also can be positively influenced by those who are godly and wise. Phil. 3:17 Luke 6:40 Acts 4:13 Heb. 13:7 6:12 Pr. 29:15 6:4 13:20 John 13:15 1 Pe. 2:21
- D. Social influences are not determinative – the heart chooses. Ezek. 18:5-18 Js. 1:14
 1. We can reject good/wise influences. Ezek. 18:5-13 Mt. 10:32-37 1 Ki. 12:1ff
 2. By God's grace we can overcome evil influences. Ezek. 18:14-18 1 Pet. 1:14-19 Eph. 4:18ff Gen. 39:1ff Daniel 1-6
 3. What about generational sins? Exodus 20:5 Deut. 5:9-10 1 Pe. 1:18-19
 4. The inner person decides to whom he will listen.
- E. Counseling people who deal with difficult social/relationship influences.
 1. Relational experiences should not be ignored, but compassionately understood. Rom. 12:15 Pr. 20:5 18:2,13,15,17
 2. Counselees cannot blame their sin on outside influences. 1 Co. 10:13 Mk. 7:14ff
 3. Help counselees to biblically evaluate the influences in their lives and to take appropriate corrective steps. 1 Co. 15:33 Pr. 23:20-21 22:24-25 29:25
 4. One's relationship with God should be the primary influence in his/her life.
 - a. Those who trust in men will wilt but those who trust God will flourish. Jer. 17:5-8
 - b. As adopted children of God, we can overcome the sinful failures of our parents. Gal. 4:4-7 Ps. 27:10 1 Pet. 1:18-19 Heb. 13:5 Eph. 4:18
 - c. The Holy Spirit indwells you, gives understanding and produces fruit. Gal. 5:16ff 1 Co. 2:14 John 16:7-11

5. We can enjoy the blessed influence of God's people in the church community. Heb. 10:24-25 1 Cor. 12:1ff Eph. 2:19-22 4:3-4,11-16
6. Learn from Joseph, who flourished despite his dysfunctional family and Daniel, who honored God though he was surrounded by ungodly influences. Gen. 37-50

V. Conclusion. 2 Co. 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.
- C. Everyone will experience temptations from bodily weaknesses and social influences, but the good news of the gospel is that in Christ they can be overcome. 2 Co. 4:7ff
- D. Jesus, Who was tempted in every way that we are, including bodily and socially, helps us in our weakness. He. 2:18 4:16-17
- E. Recommended reading.
 1. Christ-Centered Biblical Counseling, edited by James MacDonald, Bob Kelleman and Steve Viars.
 2. Blame it on the Brain, by Ed Welch.
 3. Will Medicine Stop the Pain?, by Elyse Fitzpatrick and Laura Hendrickson.
 4. "Understanding the Influences on the Human Heart," by Michael Emlet, Journal of Biblical Counseling, **Winter 2002**.