

## 1 PETER 2:1-3 NATURE OR NURTURE?

*2:1 Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. 2 Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, 3 now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.*

Why is Johnny addicted to alcohol? Why does Suzie always sabotage her friendships? Why is it that Carlos never follows through on a promise? Why does Jane give herself to every man she meets? Why does Walter only seek out other men? Such questions are grist for the mill of behavioral science. The two wheels of the mill are named nature and nurture.

Perhaps more common categories for this dichotomy would be genetics and environment. Are individuals programmed to act a certain way or are their actions a product of their interaction with the social and psychological environment in which they live?

At first blush, it would seem that Peter is coming down on the side of environment or nurture. By nature we are sinners and our relationships are fraught with malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy and slander. But if we are nurtured with pure spiritual milk, that is the word of God, then we will develop into loving persons who live the salvation life.

But when we are changed by the word, we are totally transformed. Like newborns we have a new nature. Paul says, "...if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!" (2 Corinthians 5:17). So, maybe the ultimate answer is nature.

Maybe we have so much trouble discerning whether nature or nurture is the cause of our behavior because God's answer is both. Our fallen nature and the fallen environment in which we live direct us along the path to perdition. However, God's nature and the nurture of his word transform our nature and allow us to see and follow the path of his salvation.

We can't do much about how we got to be the way we are. But we can change our future. The Good News is that God loves us and can transform us – heart, soul, mind and body.

**O God, break through the excuses and rationalizations that I compose to justify my attitudes and behaviors. As I read your word convict me of its truth and recreate a new spirit within me. Deliver me from focusing on the past and assessing blame. Rather transform me into one whose present behavior is informed by that wondrous future hope. Amen.**