

Read: 1 Peter 2:9-12

That Was Then, This Is Now

1 Peter 2:10

Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Do you have old family photos from when you were really, really young (or when your parents were young)? You'll probably notice some changes: Clothing you have outgrown. Hairstyles you can no longer pull off. Or maybe there is a person missing from your life who was in a photo years ago.

That was then, this is now.

When things change in our lives, we make adjustments. For example, because we are growing, there are clothes we can no longer fit into. So we adjust our size or style. Or, we can no longer manage the mop of hair—it's time for a haircut! Or, someone we once loved is no longer with us—it affects the look of our family.

That was then, this is now.

Think about what our lives would be like if we had not come to faith in Jesus. Today's Bible reading tells us that it's like living in total darkness, with our sin separating us from a perfect and holy God.

Then, we received God's forgiveness—God had mercy on us—and suddenly, we were different. Jesus made that possible when he grabbed our sin and covered himself with it. As a result, in God's eyes, it's as if we never had any sin—we're perfect! What a change!

Besides this incredible change in our appearance, God brought about even *more* change in our lives. He called us to believe in Jesus. Maybe this was many years ago at our baptism, or maybe it was recently when someone told us about Jesus. Either way, everything looks different through the eyes of faith. The extra weight of sin we may be carrying? Gone whenever we confess our sins to Jesus! The messy situations we get ourselves into? God cleans them up for us as we turn to him for help! The poor choices we make? God strengthens us to make better choices! What a change!

That was then, so this is now: We *want* to stay as far away from sin as we can. We *want* to live good lives so that others can see God's love and mercy through us. We *want* to adjust how we live and make good choices that reflect who we are now, as God's people. True, we won't

always make the best choices, because we're not perfect. There is still sin in and all around us. But God's people have God's forgiveness. As a result, we look different.

Let's ask God to help us live in the "now" as we close with prayer.

The questions below are to help families discuss this devotion. The questions are divided by age group as suggestions, but anyone could reflect on any of the questions as they desire.

Questions for the Younger Children

- When you think about Jesus' love for you, do you smile bigger? Why should you?
- Ask a family member to take a picture of you while you are thinking about Jesus. How do you look in that picture?

Questions for Elementary Age Children

- Think of a time when you wronged someone and had to ask for forgiveness. How did you feel before you asked for forgiveness, and how did you feel after forgiveness was given?
- When we confess our sins, God forgives us (ref. 1 John 1:9). Why should life after forgiveness look different?

Questions for Middle School and Above

- Remembering what we looked like before God's forgiveness helps us appreciate Jesus more. What did you look like "before" there was Jesus? (ref. Romans 3:20, James 1:23-25)
- Confident in our status as people of God, name two ways we can challenge each other to "live such good lives" that others take notice and give glory to God.

Closing Prayer:

Merciful God, thank you for making us your people. Help us always to appreciate this gift and live as your special people, now and always. In Jesus' name, Amen.