

Read: Acts 17:22-31

Nature and Nurture

Acts 17:29-31

Therefore since we are God's offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone—an image made by human design and skill. In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead.

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

It can be fun to look at yourself and think about everything God uses to make you who you are. Sometimes it's called "nature and nurture." Nature is the way I am because of the parents I was born to, my biological parents. Nurture is the way I am because of the parents I live with. For some kids, their "nature parents" and their "nurture parents" are the same people. For kids who live with different parents than the ones they were born to, this discovery can be even more interesting.

Let's try some together. Following is a list describing things about you. After you hear each one, determine if it is nature or nurture. Or, maybe both. Ready? Here we go:

- My eye color
- How tall I am
- I like to throw my empty soda can across the kitchen to the recycling bin
- Math feels easy for me
- I love to hike in the mountains

It is beautiful how God uses both your physical traits and what you experience to make you who you are.

The Bible calls people who believe in Jesus, "children of God." What do God's children look like, spiritually?

Our text says that God's children repent. To repent means:

- Knowing when you have sinned and wishing you hadn't done it
- Trusting that Jesus took your sin away and it isn't a problem between you and your heavenly Father

Like people might know who your mom is because of how you look, God's children look a certain way too. They don't like to sin. And they know their sin is gone from God's memory, so they aren't afraid.

And like people might know who your dad is because you both are great helpers, people who spend time with God act a certain way. People who spend time with God in his Word know how much their Father loves them. That love pours out in lives that thank him. You look like your heavenly Father when his love inspires you to treat others kindly. You resemble him when you speak truthfully and act lovingly.

We are God's creations, his amazing combinations of who we are and who we spend time with. Love who God made you to be.

Love even more who God made you in Jesus. You are God's child, and it shows in your understanding of your sin and Jesus' forgiveness. You live with God in his Word, and it shows in the life of love you offer to God and those around you.

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

- Name one thing you do the same as your mom or dad.
- Name one thing you try to do the same as Jesus.

Questions for Elementary Age Children

- Tell your parent(s) at least one way you want to be just like them.
- The Bible says: "Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven." What are two ways you can let your light shine today?

Questions for Middle School and Above

- What is the difference between being God's creation and God's child?
- You are both! What is something you appreciate about being each?

Closing Prayer:

God's own child, I gladly say it: I am baptized into Christ! (*Christian Worship* 679:1)

Thank you for making me your dear child. Help me to live as your child—being sorry for my sins, trusting that you forgive me, and living a thankful life. Amen.