

# School of Agape love (volume 1)

Andrey Karpekin

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## Introduction

In 2009, a multifaceted crisis came into my life: spiritual, economic, family, financial, social, and physical. Everything was falling apart. I was in a kind of dark forest from which I could find no way out. There were no prospects in life. I turned to my friends for help, but they only made matters worse by turning my request against me. From a human point of view, I did not know what to do, but I knew God, Who made it clear to me that He was near and had not abandoned me. I began to pour out my soul to Him, asking Him to take all my problems upon Himself and expressing in words my faith that He had already done so. And He answered. Peace came into my heart. It was so evident, and suddenly I understood how simple it was. All the cares and problems left my heart, although they remained in my life.

Then I dared to ask for something greater. I told God that I loved no one, that this quality of soul was absent from me, that everything human in me had evaporated, and that I was empty, unhappy, miserable, poor, naked, blind, and did not know what to do. This was the only basis for my request for the gift of Heavenly love. I asked Him for it because I understood that without it I was nothing. I declared my faith that this was possible. And the Lord answered. It was so unusual! Suddenly I realized that I loved! It was some new feeling and revelation for me. I do not even know how to describe it in words, but I experienced something very beautiful in my soul. The very first thought that came to mind was to begin with my wife, who was planning to divorce me. I realized that I loved her—it was so natural! The next revelation was that when I learned to love her at all times and just as she was, I would then be able to love other people as well.

At that time my wife left the church and later submitted a written request to have her membership removed, and she remains in that condition to this day.

But the Heavenly love that had been given to me from above continually sustained me and gave me strength to love this person. And I learned many things.

Looking back at the many situations during that period of my spiritual growth in love, I can say that enormous problems come upon a loving person from every side. Sometimes it feels as though the whole world has risen against you. You have to keep making the decision to love. Yet, at the same time, when I choose love, every spiritual struggle passes rather easily.

Love opens the way to understanding all biblical truths in a new light. It reveals the character of God in the proper light. It brings God so close to my heart that my soul cleaves to Him forever.

I love, and I see an enormous advantage in this in everything. It is like living and doing things in the light. Everything is visible, everything is clear, everything is understandable. Love answers many questions before I have heard them. It resolves every dispute in five minutes. It does not argue. It immerses me in the deep waters of its ocean and keeps me from evil. And I love.

There is nothing more beautiful in life than the realization that I love—the realization that this is within me, and the understanding that God within me is love.

If I abide in Jesus, and He abides in me through His love, then I bear much fruit.

I can assure you that the fruit of the Holy Spirit in all its fullness is present in those who love. Everyone who has opened their heart to love receives, together with it, all Heaven with all its advantages and victories.

Yet amid all this splendor taking place in my heart, I remain a rather inconspicuous person, absorbed in solving my tasks, thoughtful and serious. And at the same time, I am the happiest of all, and I love.

I need only turn my attention to any person as someone to love and ask Jesus for the power to love; then it comes, and all my thoughts and feelings begin to work in that direction.

What joy! Love triumphs, and I become part of its victory.

I love—and this is my choice, my decision, something that belongs only to me, because it comes from God and proceeds from me. I cannot produce it in anyone except myself, and even within myself I can only make the decision to love. Everything else comes from God: strength, fullness, depth, conviction, tenderness, and friendliness.

Love has given me many friends, and I truly love them. It is so wonderful to be friendly. What happiness it is to love and to be friends, and especially to love one another.

A person may dream for a long time of being loved and perhaps never attain it. A person may wait for it all their life and receive nothing; and when receiving love from those who are of no interest to them, they may simply fail to notice or appreciate it. It is impossible to give another person love for yourself if that person does not want it. But I myself can love and, having made this decision, live this way regardless of the attitudes and decisions of other people. And this is possible if I do it in union with Christ.

Life is beautiful for those who love.

Our planet has now entered an era of comprehensive crisis.

A crisis is not the end, but an opportunity to begin something new, to create something better and lasting in your soul. A crisis tests all your values and mercilessly demolishes, burns, washes away, and carries off everything that was fragile and temporary. It is a test of my house and the strength of its foundation.

Love is not afraid of trials. It is itself a cleansing storm in the heart where it finds refuge.

If your little house has collapsed and you have no peace, then choose what is truly valuable and eternal.

God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God.

I am very grateful to you for your interest in this school.

I pray for you, for a blessing upon this group, and for wisdom from above.

I thank our Lord Jesus for this opportunity to gather here to study the most important truth for the last days. And these truly are the very last days.

## Lesson 1. Attentiveness and Diligent Follow-Through

Before we begin studying anything, I suggest that we pay attention to our hearts and to the particular ways in which they perceive information and assignments in our school. It is very important to be attentive to every detail, to enter into the essence of things, and sometimes to stop in order to understand an assignment and complete it.

Small and simple tasks entrusted to a person very quickly reveal that person's attitude and perception. It is written that he who is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much. The one who handles small things responsibly has a good prospect of being entrusted with a great and responsible assignment.

We all have the right to make a mistake, but it may happen that, after becoming accustomed to being inattentive and making mistakes in small things, we will do the same in major tasks.

Once my daughter came to me with a complaint about her mathematics teacher, who had given her a poor grade. I decided to check her work. While solving the problem, she made a mistake at the very beginning. After that she performed precise calculations and did everything correctly, but that small mistake at the beginning affected the entire result, which proved to be wrong.

Attentiveness in learning the science of love is very important, because an error in this matter may cost you Eternal life. Of course, God knows how to help me correct myself at any time, but much still depends on my perception.

This School provides not only information but also assignments that should preferably be completed. You may do them privately for yourself, send them to the person who invited you to study,

or share your answers with those who are studying together with you.

None of you is here under compulsion; you are here by your own voluntary decision. My goal is not simply to give you information, but also to understand how ready you are to do what is proposed here and to teach you to do everything that we will study here.

I understand the full responsibility that I have assumed, and therefore I take your instruction in the science of agape love very seriously. I ask God for wisdom and special new revelations in organizing and conducting the lessons so that I may then share them for your benefit.

Learning to love is what the Lord calls us to do. You decide for yourselves how best to respond to this calling.

Be prepared for great and hidden things that you did not know to be revealed to you during your studies. Your understanding of love will be enriched with new revelations that will help you find your way in any situation.

You may read or listen to this lesson and all the lessons that follow. But do not hurry on to the next one before completing the homework at the end of each lesson. You will find it at the very bottom or in the description.

Be attentive to what you study, and the Lord will speak to your heart and mind.

Do not begin what you do not intend to continue. Set aside your best time for studying the science of love, and it will begin to open to you and become understandable. The most interesting things await you in the near future. You will learn the secrets of love, friendship, and happiness, of love for one another, and of love for the members of your household. You will see the beauty of the Bible in the light of love and begin to see love in the light of the Bible.

Many wonderful truths, presented in a new way, await you. You will be able to apply them immediately in your life and see how they work.

Diligently putting the truths and assignments presented here into practice will form in you the good habit of loving at all times, under all circumstances, and in every relationship.

Everyone will know that you are Christ's disciples if His agape love is among you.

We read in James 1:22: "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves." Everything is in your hands. The road is mastered by the one who walks it.

By the time you begin your studies with this very lesson, know that many people are already studying in this School and, through their testimonies, bear witness to the great and wonderful changes in their thinking, character, and habits. Many human or commonly accepted stereotypes are being destroyed forever.

Friends, I want to assure you that by studying the science of love, you will learn to love and will always do so from a pure heart. Love will open for you doors that may still be closed and will show you that narrow way, and all its beauty, upon which you may not yet be walking.

Do not hurry to begin in the middle or at the end. All our lessons are sequential and were written as our spiritual development and understanding progressed during this course of study.

May the Lord grant you His Holy Spirit, bless you throughout all the lessons, and reveal and show you the great and hidden things that you have not known.

1. Please read Romans 12:9-10; 1 Peter 1:22; Philippians 2:1-4; Ephesians 4:1-3, 31-32; James 4:17; 2:9-10; Luke 16:10; Isaiah 28:23-29; Proverbs 2:2; Matthew 7:24; and 1 Corinthians 14:33 in the light of our lesson.
2. What did you understand from this lesson?
3. Do you think God pays attention to small things?
4. Recall biblical figures who lost blessings because of a single mistake.

5. Is it important to God that we not only hear His Word but also gladly obey it? (See James 1:22; Revelation 1:3.)
6. How do you understand the statement, "Let love be without dissimulation"?
7. Should we express our love toward members of the opposite sex? ("Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love.")
8. Have you had experiences in which small signs of attention developed into friendship?
9. What does "in honour preferring one another" mean? Give an example.
10. What remedy would you suggest for an inattentive person?
11. Suppose you have entered Eternity. Do you think inattentiveness and failure to carry out one's responsibilities will be characteristic of the inhabitants of the Heavenly Kingdom?

## Lesson 2. Making Decisions and Following Through

Every morning, we all begin a new day by making decisions: the decision to get up, wash, pray, eat, attend to our responsibilities, and much more. Sometimes all this happens automatically, but a decision comes first.

When more difficult tasks arise and we have to make a choice, we also ultimately make a decision and declare it.

The more difficult the proposal, the more time it takes to think everything through, calculate everything, and make a decision.

A pattern has been observed: if a person makes a decision immediately or within the first day, that person will also begin carrying out the task quickly. If the decision is made within three days, there is a likelihood that the assignment will be completed. But if more time passes while an answer is awaited, it means that the answer is no.

God waits for me to choose and decide so that, on this basis, He may act within my plans. Very often He presents me with new tasks and waits for my decision. He invites me to go higher and farther, making the trials more difficult each time. He is not in a hurry, but He moves as quickly as I am able to move.

In our School, my goal is not to overwhelm you with information or to run with those who are fast. I want to teach you simple lessons: to be attentive to the small things of which our life consists, to notice what I am doing incorrectly, to recognize what is important, and to make it the main thing.

I give lessons and assignments that will progress from simple to difficult and then to very difficult, and I expect all students to make prompt decisions about completing the assignments and to show attentiveness and diligence in doing so.

Let us decide and make it a rule that time should be set aside to complete the assignments within one day after reading the lesson. Of course, exceptions are permitted for personal

reasons and family circumstances, but it is still not wise to delay.

I believe that you have made the decision to join this School—some out of curiosity and others upon someone's recommendation, perhaps without even understanding what will take place here. The method of presenting the material and the rules of the School differ from what you have previously been accustomed to. Therefore, I give each of you the freedom to determine and decide in what capacity you wish to be here.

Decide for yourselves whom you want to become: a student, a listener, or an observer.

Why do I distinguish among the participants in this way? Because all the decisions you make here have special significance for the spiritual world and give God authority to influence your heart in a special way, to teach you, and to work in you whatever He considers necessary. I ask Him for a special blessing upon all the participants and especially upon the students. And He answers.

Without Christ's participation and the convincing power of the Holy Spirit, none of our lessons will be understood or bring benefit. But in close cooperation with the three great Divine Powers, we will be able to learn very much. Making decisions and following through with them is extremely important, and it depends upon the individual alone.

The seriousness with which we approach our studies will determine the seriousness with which God works.

The science of loving forms my character and prepares me for Eternal life among holy beings. No task given to a human being is more important than forming one's character in the image and likeness of God.

Making a decision is very important, but following through with what one has decided is even more important.

Once I needed helpers to carry out a missionary project. One person assured me twice that he had decided to help me, but he did nothing in that direction. It is better to promise nothing

than to promise and fail to fulfill it. Therefore, I believe that following through with and carrying out one's decisions must be present in life.

I have decided to share with you the knowledge and revelations that I have received from the Lord.

On March 23, 2020, by God's inspiration, I decided to open this School. I did not know what it would look like and had only some of these lessons in my mind, but I believed that the Lord would reveal to me everything necessary at the proper time in order to bless you as well through this work.

And so, friends, welcome to the School of Agape Love.

1. Please read Jeremiah 12:5; Philippians 2:12-13; Joshua 24:15; Psalm 119:30; Jeremiah 29:11-13; Luke 16:10; 19:17; 1 Timothy 4:16; James 4:7; Psalm 40:8-9; and Malachi 2:7 in the light of our lesson.
2. What did you understand from this lesson?
3. What role does the will play in making decisions?
4. Which of our decisions will the Lord bless?
5. How can I determine God's will? Can I know it?
6. What prevents a person from making the right decision?
7. Do I choose what pleases me or what pleases the Lord?
8. How do you understand the words of Jesus, "Not my will, but Thine, be done"?
9. What does the Lord expect from you?
10. Why is it so important for God's people to have vision?

## Lesson 3. Respect for the Other Members of the Group

Ephesians 2:10: “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.”

We are all brothers and sisters in Christ. We have one Heavenly Father, and we have been born of the Holy Spirit for Eternal life.

Through faith in Jesus Christ, we have Eternal life, which has already begun. Even if it is interrupted by someone’s death, it will be restored and will continue at the Second Coming of Christ. And Christ is coming! Amen.

When you form a group in your region to study together in this School, you do not know very well those who have decided to study with you. Each of you has your own distinctive qualities and abilities. Some like to write a great deal; some prefer only to read; others prefer to listen. Some are tired of everything and are seeking rest, while others are ready to lead us all toward new discoveries and put new ideas into practice. Each person has their own view of things and their own opinion about one event or another.

We have all been created for one another unto good works.

We have gathered here to learn to love one another, to respect the opinions of others, and to be kind and patient. And this is possible.

We have been given the threefold promise, “Love one another.” Three times Jesus declares to us that we will succeed, because He desires to see this in us; otherwise, He would not have commanded us to do it. God will fulfill this promise in our lives because He sees our desire to learn it.

It is possible that rule-breakers will appear in the group, or that someone may be very emotional, cheerful, or very radical and

begin disrupting order with their revelations. I ask you to respect their opinions and not enter into unnecessary arguments. Establish rules for yourselves and write them down if it becomes necessary to introduce them.

Each of us is a unique and unrepeatable person. Everyone has their own destiny, difficulties, and past, about which we know nothing. Perhaps someone is struggling with sin and does not know the way out. We are called to love, and love respects a person's choice and freedom, even though it hates sin.

The Lord will certainly allow various difficulties and disagreements here as well in order to teach us something. Therefore, do not be troubled when trials come. Love covers all things.

It is very important to understand the direction of our studies: I am learning to love. These arrows must be directed from my heart toward all those near me in your group. And I believe that the arrows of love and friendship from the other participants will touch you as well.

The process has begun, and it cannot be stopped. The goal has been established, and we will reach it. The most powerful Force in the entire Universe has been given to help us. We are entering a boundless ocean called Love. May its waters wash every impurity from our hearts and make us clean and fit for Eternity.

To respect means to esteem each person as better than yourself, to see in that person someone you can admire and from whom you can learn. Whoever among you desires to be greatest, let that person be the servant of all.

I believe that very soon you will see for yourselves how harmoniously Jesus can bring together different people who share a good common goal.

Have a blessed journey, friends.

I have understood this truth for myself: not everyone wants to know my opinion on one matter or another. Therefore, I am in no hurry to share my revelations with those who do not need

them. There is a time to keep silence and a time to speak. The time has come to love.

The purpose of this lesson is to understand that I am not alone here. I am surrounded by those who are waiting for the time when I learn to love them and can freely express my feelings without being embarrassed before the friends around me.

1. Please read Romans 12:4-5, 10; 14:5; John 15:17; Ephesians 4:1-3; 2:10; Colossians 3:12; Philippians 2:3; James 1:2-6; and Isaiah 66:8-10 in the light of our lesson.
2. What did you understand from this lesson?
3. Why is it important to remember and take into account each person's individual characteristics when communicating?
4. How can we learn to respect another person's opinion?
5. Give a definition: what does it mean to respect someone?
6. What should you do if people do not listen to you?

## Lesson 4. Punctuality

We live in a world of time. It was given to us after the Fall. We managed to divide it into hours, then into minutes, seconds, and microseconds. Whereas twelve o'clock in the afternoon once meant approximately an hour earlier or later, today it means 12:00 precisely.

If you live in Switzerland for a while, you will be surprised by how meticulously and precisely everything is calculated there. In Japan, one minute means one minute consisting of sixty seconds—and no more.

And yet we also live in the spiritual world, which has its own rules and laws. When I arrange to meet God at a certain time and then arrive late, I thereby express my lack of reverence for Him. He is kind; He will understand and forgive, but the fact remains that I consider myself more important than Him.

Self-discipline is very important in every area of life, and especially in spiritual life. Punctuality is welcomed in every society, even among the good angels. If I enter into an agreement with someone, I am expected to fulfill my obligations according to that agreement.

If I agree upon a particular time, my presence is expected at that time.

I live in a country where all relationships are built upon trust. Documents here hardly even have official seals, because people do not need them. My word carries great weight, and my signature guarantees that I agree with or will fulfill what I have signed.

By entering this School of Love, friends, you have undertaken the responsibility of studying this science properly. It is very multifaceted, complex, beautiful, and interesting. You cannot even imagine what you are coming into contact with. In this School we are given enormous advantages: to learn the laws of Eternity, to study them, and to live by them even now. This

journey has begun, and we will complete it. Jesus has already prepared this road and will Himself teach us.

Today, together with an answer to the homework, I received the following response from our friend:

“This is a blessing. Yes. And you know, I write things down and reflect upon them, and in my heart I feel God’s support. I love His approval and the realization that you are doing something right—that quiet yet profound joy. I am certain that this work you have begun will bring good results for people.”

I believe that many of you will experience something similar—and something even greater and better. This is only the beginning.

Love fills the heart with happiness, and happiness draws me into friendship with those whom I can make happy. Most interesting of all, the love that we sow into one another sprouts and bears much fruit.

By acting punctually, I express my respect and regard for the person with whom I am dealing.

Write this down in your notebook: love is punctual, but it does not reproach those who do not understand this or have not learned it.

I often attend various gatherings, and sometimes I am surprised that a schedule is issued, the beginning of a meeting is announced, and a time is set, yet almost no one arrives by that time—including the organizers themselves. I always wonder: do these people arrive this way for a train or airplane as well? But then I make myself smile, become filled with love, and rejoice that at some point we will begin anyway. It was difficult for me to understand why my brothers acted this way. I wanted to find an excuse for them and decide how I should properly relate to it. Then the Lord reminded me how many times I myself had arrived late to spiritual events and how He had received and blessed me. Afterward, He pointed me to the good Samaritan, who did not arrive at all where he was supposed to be. And I became calm. It is written of Jesus and of those who love God

that they will not quench the smoking flax or break the bruised reed until they bring forth judgment unto victory. And only the one who loves is victorious. I do not know the true circumstances of these people; I do not know their struggles or motives. Perhaps they have become disappointed in everything and simply need a friend. Therefore, I do not judge anyone in any way.

I was told about a missionary in Africa. He was hurrying to the beginning of a meeting, but his driver kept stopping beside every person and talking for a long time. When asked why he had stopped yet again, the driver calmly replied that he had not seen this woman for a long time, so he had asked about all ten of her children and could continue driving only after listening to her. The driver asked the missionary not to worry, because all the people would arrive later anyway. They arrived late, but the meeting hall was empty. After three hours of waiting, the hall filled with guests, and they began. With my European way of thinking, it is difficult for me to understand such an order of things, but God has His Own plans for these people, and He knows how to approach and address each one of them.

And yet God teaches me to be punctual.

Punctuality in small things teaches me diligence in greater things.

1. Please read Isaiah 55:10-11; 1 Corinthians 14:40; Ecclesiastes 3:1-8; Philippians 2:3-4; Proverbs 21:5; Ephesians 5:15-16; and Philippians 1:10 in the light of our lesson.
2. What did you understand from this lesson?
3. Do you like punctual people?
4. Is punctuality connected with a person's spirituality?
5. What should a person do to become punctual?
6. Can a punctual person be proud, unforgiving, or harsh?

## Lesson 5. Recognizing What Matters Most and Having a Goal

Every day we receive a great deal of information on many different subjects, and our brain tries to process it all, analyze it, draw conclusions, and convey to our consciousness the meaning of what we have heard. The information we receive begins to influence my heart, and a full heart gives a command to the mouth, so I begin telling everyone what I have filled myself with. Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.

In the spiritual world, an unceasing struggle is taking place for possession of the human mind. Two supernatural powers are in constant opposition. My mind is under continual attack, and I decide what I will feed it.

Whatever I think about most—whatever fills my heart—becomes most important to me.

Something new continually enters my life and begins to change my consciousness and adapt it to the situation that has developed. And I must decide what to do.

Jesus gave timeless and perfectly appropriate counsel to those who are troubled by various problems and whose hearts seek an answer to the question of what they should do. We read in the Gospel of Matthew: “Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your Heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the Kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof” (Matthew 6:31-34).

Amid this abundance of information, I have the opportunity to choose what I consider important, to fill my heart with it, and to

make it the principal direction in which my thoughts and feelings move.

I am aware of what is happening in the world, and in the light of the Bible I see that many signs of the times point to the soon Coming of Jesus.

It is like traveling toward a particular destination and reading road signs that tell you the destination is drawing nearer and nearer. Meanwhile, various billboards urge you to stop, turn aside, and accept what they claim is more important. How fortunate are those who have a navigation system in the car that is set to the final destination and shows the best route from any location. If I make a wrong turn, the navigator does not scold me. It recalculates the route and offers to return me to the previous road, or it finds a new road by which I can reach the destination I have chosen. No matter how far away I may travel, the navigator tries to find a way out of every situation for me.

If I enter the wrong destination, then no matter how correctly and obediently I drive, I will arrive exactly where I indicated, even though the road signs may tell me that I am moving in a completely different direction.

Once I needed to reach an unfamiliar city, and I knew the general direction in which it lay. At that time there were no navigation systems or mobile phones. I had only a road map. I traveled along an unfamiliar road, relying upon intuition and my sense of direction, and I was certain that I was traveling correctly until I encountered a sign telling me that I was moving in the opposite direction, even though my feelings told me otherwise. Nevertheless, I decided to obey the sign and change my route. To my surprise, I reached my destination very quickly. This taught me to trust the signs.

I have been given the Bible, the sure Word of God, as a road sign that shows me the best way to the final destination. If I follow its directions, I will certainly reach the goal established by God. The Holy Spirit, like a navigator, shows me the best route, using the Bible, spiritual literature, or other children of

God with whom I have surrounded myself. My will makes the choice and, like an automobile, carries me toward the goal.

The enemy of souls offers me a completely different direction and desires either to stop me or to break down my vehicle so that I will go nowhere.

Love is the goal of my spiritual growth and personal development. If I set my heart upon reaching this goal and make it the main goal, I can clearly see what distracts me and can quickly sift out what is less important and leads me aside. My Heavenly Navigator continually points out the best way, but I myself must decide how I will proceed.

The closer I come to the goal, the more clearly and fully I understand the advantage of reaching it. The path becomes more difficult, but the goal is seen more clearly. Its influence absorbs my whole being, and I joyfully desire to reach it.

I see that the most important thing in my life is to know God and Jesus Whom He sent, to know God's love and receive it into my heart, to become like Jesus in love and in trust in God's words and promises. I choose this route and make it the main one.

What is now distracting me from reaching the main goal? When I hear the call to learn love, what does the world offer me in exchange? What do I discuss with my friends and acquaintances? What fills my heart to overflowing?

A war is being waged for my mind. I decide whom to listen to and where to go. During a crisis, Jesus remains the same loving Friend Who desires to help me understand what matters most, just as He was during favorable times. His blood has not lost its power to save and cleanse from the dominion of sin. Yet I alone decide what is most important to me. Information from outside may distract me from the main thing, but you and I must choose the final destination, my friend.

My radio receiver will pick up the signals to which it is tuned. Which navigator will I choose for myself?

Friends, a war is now being waged to make the events taking place in the world the most important thing to me. Will I drift with the current of this world, or will I choose another goal and regard it as most important?

I choose love and decide to attain it. What will you choose?

1. Please read Matthew 6:31; John 13:34-38; Psalm 119:105; Philippians 3:14; 1 Corinthians 9:25-27; 1 John 3:11; 4:21; Psalm 91:15; Romans 13:8; and John 21:15 in the light of our lesson.
2. What is the main thought of the lesson?
3. Read John 13:36-38. Why did Peter answer in this way? Whom does this remind you of?
4. What is most important in your life? Please share.
5. Why is it important to set a goal and follow it?

## Lesson 6. The Unheard New Commandment

Jesus lived for thirty years in Nazareth, where He was in favour with God and man, and the grace of God was upon Him. After this, He was called by the Father to His ministry. Another three and a half years passed, and His earthly mission approached its culmination. He knew what awaited Him, and Christ's heart trembled. Just before His death, He called His twelve disciples to Himself and decided to reveal something very important to them. But first, He allowed Judas to make his final decision to betray Him and to leave them all.

And so Jesus, knowing that His hour had come and that He would soon die for the sins of humanity, gathered the eleven disciples and decided to tell them something very important. How His heart ached with the realization that they would not hear Him—and that even if they heard, they would not understand! Nevertheless, He solemnly declared: "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:34-35). He understood that they would not hear Him and, even if they heard, would not understand; yet He still hoped that they would at least pay attention. When He said this, Peter's response confirmed His fears.

Jesus gave some further instruction, and then He again proclaimed the commandment to love one another—and afterward proclaimed it once more.

As we read the account of Christ's life, we see that He taught, but He commanded nothing. Yet immediately before His death, He spoke the most important thing that had to be said before the crucifixion and had to enter the New Testament. And the word was spoken. The entire universe heard the command of the Son of God that from that time onward, all Christ's followers were being given the most powerful force in the universe—Agape Love. Jesus commanded, "Love one another."

The original says, "Agape one another." God's Angels stood still in rapture: now the inhabitants of earth would become like God and love as He loves. How wonderful! But instead of cries of joy, they heard questions about completely different matters. Their astonishment knew no bounds. In this gift, God was offering them Himself and all Heaven, yet they did not hear.

Jesus knew that they were not yet ready for such a turn of events, but He did not condemn them and gave them more detailed explanations. Over three and a half years, He had become accustomed to the disciples not immediately understanding the meaning of what He said. And He promised them Himself in the gift of the Holy Spirit. Heaven again rejoiced: through this gift, the inhabitants of earth, like the angels, would be directly connected with Jesus and have continual fellowship with Him, and through Him with the Father. It was impossible even to dream of a better condition! The human family would become one with the Heavenly family. People would become like God. They would love one another with Heavenly love! What joy!

The entire invisible spiritual world listened with delight to every word of Jesus. The plan of Salvation and its continuing influence were being opened before the disciples.

The instruction concluded with Jesus' prayer, and the prayer itself concluded with a request for Heavenly love for Christ's disciples.

Heaven rejoiced; the prayer was answered. If the ransom for humanity from the dominion of sin was paid, then all the commands Jesus had given before the crucifixion would come into force, and the disciples would receive unlimited access to Heaven and to its treasures of God's love and grace. At last, people would understand what happiness is. They would love one another—what a beautiful sight for all Heaven! In a world filled with sin, people like Jesus would live. They would possess agape love for one another and for their enemies, and through this gift they would reveal God's character to the world.

From that time onward, God's character would be revealed to the world and restored in the human being.

Only one thing remained: to ransom humanity from the power of eternal death. Jesus made His decision and courageously took this step.

1. Read the commandments concerning love in chapters 13 and 15 of the Gospel of John. They speak of the same thing and sound like commandments, but they are expressed differently.
2. Please read 1 John 4:7-12, 16, 20-21; 1 John 3:16; and Leviticus 19:18 in the light of our lesson.
3. Why did Jesus pronounce the commandment of love three times?
4. Why did Peter not hear Jesus?
5. Have you heard this commandment?
6. How does a commandment differ from an ordinary rule?

## Lesson 7. Effort Is Necessary

Reflecting upon my path and the various stages of growth in Christ throughout my life, I can say that I passed through different milestones in my spiritual growth. In 1993, I accepted Christ as my personal Savior and made Him the Most Important One in my life. Two years later, I was baptized in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Throughout that time, I studied the Bible and the few spiritual books that were being published and reached me during that period. I then understood the danger that television posed to my spiritual life and decided to have nothing to do with it. However, I did not know how to remove it from my home, but I decided to make what was most important the most important thing.

In 1998, I bought a computer and began learning to use it. I immediately noticed how much time working with this new technology consumed—and that it took this time away from what was most important. I decided to keep what was most important as the most important thing, while also learning about the electronic world, working two jobs, and raising a young daughter. I lived in the countryside and greatly appreciated its advantages.

In 1999, I discovered the Internet and its opportunities for evangelism. Very little time remained for life itself. Yet I decided to make what was most important the most important thing. Although electronic life consumed much time, I learned to save time so that with little expenditure I could receive great advantages.

Afterward, I moved to a city, and later to another city.

Throughout that time, my whole life was a struggle for survival. Constant financial difficulties compelled me to work a great deal. Evangelism on the Internet consumed much time, yet I also wanted to read, have fellowship with God, meet with friends, and be with my family. I made an effort to grow and develop in the spiritual world as well.

Every morning, continually, I sought God and held on to Him with all my strength.

But in 2009, a real and comprehensive crisis entered my life, and I understood that something had to change, although I did not know what. I began asking for love, and God began to answer.

This is where the most interesting part began. It seemed that all the forces of evil had come crashing down upon me. Temptations and trials pressed upon me from every side, yet I was happy that I loved and was at peace in Jesus. Everything I undertook for my spiritual development and formation was destined for success, and God's love was always with me. In it, I became victorious.

By 2010, smartphones had appeared. At first, I saw them as a great evil for my spiritual nature and wanted nothing to do with them. I preferred reading books and using a computer. What was most important remained the most important thing in my life. I fought for my spiritual purity and won victories in spiritual battles.

Later, however, I noticed that a smartphone could save me time, and I decided to own one.

In 2014, I purchased a new Samsung phone, which I immediately gave away because I could not afford such a luxury, and I bought a Chinese model instead. A digital boom began in my mind. I understood what danger a person could carry in his pocket if he did not keep his fleshly desires under control. I began making an effort not to fall into temptation, and I made what was most important the most important thing in my life.

Every morning, I place myself in God's hands and live with Him throughout the day, quietly rejoicing in our fellowship. I have learned to give everything to Him and to resolve every task and problem with Him. This requires even greater effort, but it is not difficult, because I desire it and have made it the most important thing. In response to our relationship, He gives me

His love, which makes my struggle against sin so easy—but not without effort.

I understood something very important in the School of Love: merely listening to and reading about love is not enough, although that too is necessary. Sometimes a person must also get up in order to do something, decide and accomplish something, promise something and fulfill it.

I studied the laws of wealth and business management and learned how to earn money, but love does not allow me to accumulate wealth in this world; its treasures are stored in another place. Although I have so many opportunities to become rich, I become rich toward God and make what is most important the most important thing.

Matthew 11:12 says: “And from the days of John the Baptist until now the Kingdom of Heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.” This is indeed so.

In our day, the digital world has become part of life, and it can no longer be removed; this is a fact. But my phone can become my enemy if I do not know what is most important to me. It can deprive me of spiritual strength and of the desire to make an effort to obtain what is most important by offering me an easy life. You touch the little screen, lie down on the couch, and simply lie there listening—or, even better, watching. And you know everything. Wonderful! What would Solomon have written about this? Vanity, all is vanity. Or, more precisely: emptiness, emptiness of emptiness.

I believe that a profound meaning is embedded in the terms used for the Internet and social media: the World Wide Web and social network. These things are intended to catch someone in them and, once caught, make that person their victim. Here effort is needed simply to avoid becoming dull-minded amid the abundance of information, to make what is most important the most important thing, and to remain steadfast in this to the end. This requires effort. It requires superhuman effort, and such effort is available to us. Its name is love, happiness, and friendship in Christ Jesus.

1. Please read Matthew 11:12; Romans 12:11; Matthew 6:33-34; Philippians 4:13; 3:14; and Matthew 7:14 in the light of our lesson.
2. What did you understand from this lesson?
3. What does it mean to take it by force? What does this look like in your life?
4. What effort does the Lord expect from you?
5. What does the enemy offer in order to deprive me of spiritual strength?
6. How can we free ourselves from the dangerous influence of television and the computer?
7. What help does the Lord offer us? See Revelation 3:18.

## Lesson 8. What Is Love?

It is very important for all of us to understand what kind of love is being discussed here, what it is like, what it consists of, and how it can be revealed and known.

It is impossible to give a full and exhaustive answer to the question of our lesson all at once. I have been writing about this for many years and understand that I have only just begun to uncover something. Yet how many facets of the diamond of love still need to be discovered in my life and made my own!

Nevertheless, I will try to explain the essence of love, and in all the lessons that follow, I will reveal its depth comprehensively.

It is written that God is Love, and he who abides in love abides in God. This is the key to understanding.

When agape love begins to reign in my heart, at first there is no explanation for this phenomenon. Everything seems to be going well, but better than before. God becomes more real, closer, and dearer. I feel Him within me, but I cannot understand where He is. He blends what is His with what is mine, gives me the right to choose, and acts on the basis of my decisions or requests.

Salvation is me in Christ and the knowledge of God's will and the beauty of His character within my mind and heart.

Love is Christ in me. It is fellowship with God and the knowledge of Him already within me. It is the complete presence of God in my heart and mind, a clear and comprehensive understanding of truth, and at the same time the complete granting of freedom to choose my own path, decisions, and actions. Yet love leads me to action in such a way that, as I fulfill God's will and obey the law, I fulfill the desire of my own heart and do so with joy.

Love is the lamp of my heart, which cannot be hidden, which shines within me, and which is visible to everyone.

Love becomes a target for the forces of evil and brings many trials into my life, but the Lord is my shield, my salvation, and my victory within me. In answer to Jesus' prayer, He keeps my heart from evil, giving me the opportunity to be His witness in this world.

Love is gold tried in the fire of trials, with which I can pay for every service rendered by my friends, my fellow believers, my God, my enemies, and my neighbors. With this wealth, I pay the servants of the evil one for all the problems and curses they bring into my life and for every desire they have to rob, kill, and destroy me. I have nothing else to give them in return, so I give them love.

Love is a currency that will never lose its value. What I acquire here in earthly life will make me very rich in Eternity. The interest from my earthly savings will continually replenish my Heavenly account throughout endless life among holy beings.

Love is the harmony of God and the human being within me. I was created for love, and when I entered this path, I simply agreed with my Creator's original plan and became part of His complex mechanism of the beautiful Universe.

My body is built from love, and when my mind and heart are joined to the Source of love, my life enters into absolute harmony with nature and makes me fit in every area of my being for a happy life in Jesus.

Love restores physical, emotional, and spiritual balance.

Love is the sum of all the perfections provided by God for my spiritual development and perfection.

This description can be continued endlessly. I simply look into my heart and share what has accumulated there. There is no need to invent anything; we need only take what is there and give it to others.

And the Head of all this is Christ. Love is the result of our close relationship with Him.

But it must be chosen, purchased, and tenderly preserved—and this is possible for everyone.

1. Please read Philippians 2:13; Colossians 3:14; 1 John 4:7-16; Romans 13:8; Romans 5:5; and 1 Corinthians 12:31 in the light of our lesson.
2. What did you understand from this lesson? What kind of love is being discussed?
3. What does Philippians 2:13 have to do with our subject?
4. How do you understand 1 John 4:16?
5. What currency will exist in Heaven?
6. For what purpose were we created?
7. What is Agape Love?
8. What is love: a relationship, a skill, a quality, a fruit, a person, a pink heart, a smile, emotions, a principle, a law, freedom from the law, mercy, or justice?
9. Read 1 Corinthians 12:30. How can we find the more excellent way, what is this way, and where does it lead?

## Lesson 9. Acknowledging the Need

The human being was created by Love for love. Humanity was created in the image and likeness of God. The Creator placed the law of love within every cell of our being. But by sinning, humanity lost the harmony of love, and selfishness entered our world.

We are born into this world having inherited from our first parents a sinful nature in which God's love cannot dwell at the same time.

But God has a plan for each of us. God gave His Son in order, through Him, to reveal His character to people and restore it within them. With Christ's death and resurrection, this plan came into effect.

Agape love became available to everyone who believes in the Son of God. Immediately before His death, Jesus gave us the commandment to love one another, opening the way to this Eternal love. It can come quietly and unnoticed and, having fulfilled its purpose, depart just as quietly. It can be requested for special occasions, used for good, and forgotten. It can modestly settle in a person's heart and wait for the hour when it has an opportunity to manifest its power, yet remain unused throughout that person's entire life. Love waits for a person to understand that it exists, that it is available, and that it can be possessed. It is not granted for perpetual use merely because a person was born into this world. Love is conditional in its reception and is obtained in all its fullness only by those who have believed in Jesus and acknowledged Him as their Savior and Lord, by those who desire to live according to the rules of Eternal life in obedience to God and His law.

Yet despite all its strength and authority to accomplish whatever it desires, love waits for a person to exercise the will through the decision and desire to love—the desire to possess this great power for victory over sin and personal selfishness.

God has a great abundance of love, and He desires to endow everyone with its power, but He cannot do this without the person's consent.

We need to ask and understand what we are asking for. We must thirst for this love. At the same time, it is very important to realize that if I ask for this power as a feeling, if I desire to sense its presence, then I will receive exactly what I ask for—but not at all what Agape Love actually is. On the other hand, if I thirst to have the One Who is Love and also desire to receive the power to love, then I receive this in all its fullness.

I have nothing. I can only acknowledge this. But acknowledgment alone does not give me the right to receive. Only when I realize my poverty and my need for this power, when I thirst and desire with all my heart to have this gift of God in Jesus, and when I ask God for it, will I receive what was promised, because the Most High will not be able to resist such a request.

The principle is this: whoever thirsts for the Son will receive everything together with Him.

The one who receives the Son but does not thirst for love may lose both Him and love.

I want to be understood correctly. I will give an illustration. Two young people, a man and a woman, fell in love and decided to have an intimate relationship. Outside of marriage, this is called fornication. They wanted to do everything correctly, so they married and received one another. Time passed, and the young couple understood that they had an intimate relationship, but there was no love. Where there is no love, problems begin. Where there are problems, there appear those who are right and those who are guilty. The spouses live with this burden while dreaming of happiness. Yet the essence of marriage does not consist in receiving each other's body and a helper for life, building a house, or having children. It consists in the deep and intimate knowledge of the person with whom you live. Without this knowledge, it is difficult to build a harmonious relationship. When I understand that my spouse is

seriously interested in me as a person and is doing everything possible to understand and discover me more fully, I begin to open myself and to discover my spouse. We become one whole. Our love for one another acquires strength and constancy. It becomes desirable. When I love my life companion, I trust, and then I know how I can love my neighbors and enemies.

This does not come unexpectedly or by accident. A person must strive for it, make an effort, and do everything possible to build the little house of happiness. Those who have or have had families will understand me.

Now let us apply these reflections to our relationship with Christ. Do I need His power working through love, or do I need Him Himself? Do I want to become the possessor of agape, or do I desire a close relationship with Jesus—to know Him as a Friend, as Lord, as my Savior and Husband? What do I need? What do I thirst for?

To receive from God the power to overcome and then tell others about this victory, while remaining weak and defenseless for future battles, is not a very good prospect. But if I have the One Who is my strength, my victory, and my love, then I have the opportunity to be victorious in every war.

What, then, should I ask for? I should ask for what my soul thirsts for. I may ask for the gift, or I may ask for the Giver—or first ask for thirst for this gift. But do I thirst for anything?

The very fact that I have enrolled in the School of Agape Love gives me an advantage in receiving this Love and learning to use it. The status of a student gives God special authority to teach me this love by endowing me with this power. The Lord is the true Teacher. But everything begins with personal prayer to my God. Acknowledging that there is no love within me, that I have a great need for agape love, for Jesus, and for the knowledge of the Eternal One is, in God's eyes, very convincing evidence that He needs to give this to me. God has already promised to give it to those who thirst and to pour it upon the parched ground. And He will fulfill His word.

The Lord is waiting for my prayers. He waits in order to give. He longs to see the parched ground so that He may pour upon it. When my desire unites with His will, I receive what I ask for and thirst for.

Love comes quietly, but faith sees it and rejoices, carefully receiving it and beginning to use it. Jesus becomes so dear and close that no one else is needed, because no one better than Him exists. Yet He seems to say that it is not good for man to be alone: "I will give you those to whom you will give My love and whom you will raise to a happy life. Ask for more, and you will receive."

What should I do? Ask. This is the next step of faith.

1. Please read Isaiah 44:3; 45:3; 55:1; Matthew 5:3; Revelation 21:6; John 7:37-38; and Matthew 7:7-8 in the light of our lesson.
2. What did you understand from this lesson?
3. Does your soul thirst for love?
4. What prevents a person from receiving the gift of love?
5. Have you understood the difference between asking in prayer for the gift of love and asking for the Giver of love?

## Lesson 10. Growth in Love

How many songs have been sung about love! How many sermons have been preached! How many books have been written! How many hearts love has changed! And how many prayers for this gift ascend to the throne of grace. First John 4:8 says: “He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.”

When Jesus gave the commandment of love, He knew that many of His followers would not pay attention to it at first and would take it for granted. The Lord proclaimed this commandment again and again, and He gave it special emphasis. The very command to love one another already contains the promise that this will be possible—that God will give strength to everyone who consciously decides to obey this word. God desires us to love one another. He desires to see this gift within us. Love is not merely a feeling; Love is Jesus Himself within the human being.

If the commandment were expressed as it actually is—“Have God and give God to one another”—I believe Christians would have particular difficulties and disagreements in interpreting such a command. But when it speaks of love, the commandment becomes understandable even to a child.

“Does God want to give us love?” This is a strange question, but it is asked quite often and always remains relevant. The answer is affirmative: “Yes.” But why, then, is the question asked, “How can I receive it?” This means that not everything is so simple. If it were simple, there would be no need to teach it. You would ask, receive, and love. Although this is essentially how it is, a person must first grow to this point.

God longs for all of us to become perfect in love. When I make this the goal of my life, the Lord begins to lead me toward this goal and brings me to it.

In the world, as in my body, the law of sin and the law of the flesh dominate. From morning until evening, worldly principles

attack us. We are taught that we must live for ourselves and do everything for our own pleasure. In return, however, a person receives emptiness. This emptiness does not satisfy the soul or bring peace to the heart, and when death knocks at the door of your life, fear comes.

But there is no fear in love. Love has set itself in opposition to the world and the flesh. Love reveals the true nature of God.

God hears every prayer for love and answers it. But we must understand a very important rule. If a child asks his father to make him an adult, he simply does not understand that this is possible but will be completely fulfilled only after he grows up and learns many things. When a person is born, no one asks why that person cannot walk, speak, or read. In exactly the same way, when a person is born again, it is wrong to expect perfection in love immediately. A person must grow to this point. Yet the pace of spiritual growth differs for every believer, and for some it may even stop. A person's status or title is irrelevant, because perfect love is the fullness of growth and perfection for every believer.

Love is the deep knowledge of God within oneself. It is the complete harmony of life with Jesus; it is fellowship with the Holy Spirit; it is the abundance that is available only to an adult. When reflecting and speaking about love, we must not diminish it or reduce it to the intellect of a child. Love is the bond of perfectness. Colossians 3:14 says: "And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness."

Would you entrust a child to drive a car independently? Would you place a chainsaw in the child's hands to cut down a forest? This is possible if your hand is also holding the steering wheel or the handle of the saw. God knows better than we do what to give and entrust to us, and at what time. Therefore, He leads us toward this perfection, but He leads each person in His Own way. My desire to live in love and possess it accelerates this process.

No one who plants a seed in the ground expects an immediate result from its growth—the appearance of fruit. The same is true of love. We must learn love and become perfected in it.

Sometimes, however, God seats each of us upon His knees and places in our hands the steering wheel called Agape so that we may experience all the power and beauty of this journey and desire to learn to handle Agape perfectly. But His hand also holds this steering wheel and is always ready to correct our course in order to protect us from an accident.

We have already entered this path, and the goal is clear. Shall we continue?

1. Please read Mark 4:26–29; Luke 2:52; 1 John 4:8; Ephesians 4:12–16; Psalm 31:19; Matthew 6:27; 1 Peter 1:8–9; and 2 Peter 1:5–8 in the light of our lesson.
2. What did you understand from this lesson?
3. Is Agape Love a gift from Heaven? Is it possible to learn it?
4. Does God want to give us Love?
5. Why did God not create beings who love and are incapable of doing otherwise, thereby excluding the possibility of a fall?
6. Do you enjoy loving?
7. How does agape love differ from the love that exists in this world?

## Lesson 11. God Answers Prayers for Love

Friends, if you could imagine how wonderful it is to love and abide in love, to live by it, give it, plead for it, respond with it, place it into every undertaking, and simply love at all times, you would probably make it the main goal of your life immediately and move confidently toward it.

But we live in an age of speed, and we want to receive everything immediately and in abundance. If we live in a civilized environment, all the benefits of the world and everything necessary for life are within easy reach. The Internet enables a person to learn everything quickly and remain informed about everything, and it is unique in that it belongs to no one. Each of us can become a blogger and gather like-minded people in order to share our revelations and opinions. All this and much more has taught us that we can very quickly become owners of many things and valuables with little expenditure of time and effort. The banking system is prepared to lend you any amount if you prove that you are able to repay it or can offer something as collateral. All these so-called benefits of civilization have taught us to receive the immediate satisfaction of all our needs.

Therefore, when I hear the message that God desires to give me love and teach me to use it, I become inspired by this idea and immediately run to Him, offering the most fervent prayers and believing that it will become mine as well. But the answer is silence—such silence that my ears begin to ring. I again listen to those who possess love and truly live in this condition, and again I go to God and ask, but He seems silent. I pray for the gift of the Holy Spirit, yet nothing supernatural takes place in my life. I begin to wonder: what is the problem? Why does God not answer? Why do I not possess what the person speaking about it possesses? It is very difficult for me to understand this. I may even lose heart and become disappointed. But if I continue persistently asking God for what He has promised to give, my faith begins to grow, and I understand that God delays

in nothing. If everything does not happen so quickly, it is because some things need time to mature and become visible.

God answers prayers for love. He hears all my requests and takes note of them. He is very wise and therefore makes no mistakes. From the beginning, God knows what will be at the end of this world and of my life. He does not always hurry to answer, but He always answers as He considers necessary. He is faithful to His promises, and His Word accomplishes what proceeded from His mouth.

When I ask for agape love, I receive an immediate answer. All Heaven is set in motion, and I begin to be prepared to receive the fullness of this gift of Heaven. I am given a seed of love that God will cultivate in my heart, and in time I will be able to bear much fruit if I carefully preserve this treasure and care for it. But I myself must plant this seed in my heart, while God causes it to grow.

There are prayers that receive an immediate answer: requests for the forgiveness of sins and for Jesus to take all my cares upon Himself. My faith in the fulfillment of these requests gives me the right to receive an immediate answer. This teaches me that God is swift in everything. Yet in the request for love, in practice, everything does not happen as quickly as I imagine. There are prayers to which God says “no,” “wait,” or “yes,” and there are requests concerning which He remains silent in order to test my faith and true motives.

A prayer for love, for the reception of this gift, corresponds to God’s dream for me. He probably waits for this prayer more than anything else in the world. To Him it sounds like this: “Lord, be my Husband.” And He wants to understand what lies behind these words.

If I desire to create a family, it is very important for me to understand the true motive of my chosen bride—to understand what she needs. Does she want me myself, my body, my possessions, my connections and influence? Perhaps she fears loneliness or desires to have children. I understand that our world is deceptive and that an improper goal may be concealed

behind visible affection and attraction. Therefore, a desire arises to test everything and understand who is before you. Time spent in fellowship and shared activities reveals many aspects of a person's soul and forms a firm understanding of that person's true motives and goals. I see this and decide what to do. Sometimes goals that were selfish at first grow into true love and affection during the course of friendship, because I come to know the person more closely and open myself to that person.

God prepares my heart through various circumstances of life, then draws me to Jesus, sends me light and hope, grants me His grace and the gift of repentance, sees my desire to love, and gives me the seed of love. He asks me to plant this seed in my heart so that, when I do so, He may begin to cultivate it. How can I plant a seed in my heart? This happens when I understand that love has been planted in this place and that it will grow if I tenderly care for this plant. This is a conscious action that cannot happen accidentally or against my will. I understand what is growing within me, and I wait for the fruit.

God's dream for me has been set in motion, and He will do everything on His part, while my part depends only upon me.

1. Please read Hebrews 11:6; Philippians 1:6; Matthew 7:16-20; 21:43; Mark 4:20; Luke 6:43-44; and 13:6-9 in the light of this lesson.
2. What did you understand from this lesson?
3. Is it worthwhile to ask God for something that you cannot immediately understand?
4. Is the comparison between the growth of love in the heart and the growth of plants in nature clear to you?
5. Will God answer your request for love?
6. Have you already prayed for this?
7. Is it worthwhile to believe that you will receive what you expect, even if at first you feel nothing?

## Lesson 12. What Do I Receive in Love?

It is very important to understand what love gives me and what I receive together with this gift.

Love is the most precious Heavenly treasure; nothing greater or more valuable exists or ever will exist. Yet it is offered to us very unobtrusively and given with great care and tenderness. When granting love, the Lord perfectly controls how I perceive it and my ability to receive it. My interest, understanding, thirst, and desire to possess it are all taken into account. Perhaps no other biblical gift of Heaven receives such close attention as the gift of love, when a person's true needs and necessities are examined.

By asking God for love, I am essentially expressing my desire to become one with Him, to enter into a marriage covenant with Him, and to know Him so closely and deeply that it is difficult even to describe.

A person may ask for love indirectly. This happens when I pray for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and for His power to meet my spiritual needs; when I ask Jesus to become my Friend and to live in my heart in all His fullness; when I ask the Father to reveal the beauty of His law, His character, and His glory; and when I ask for power to overcome sin and harmful habits. Yet indirect requests can limit God and restrain Him from pouring out the fullness of love. In this gift, I receive everything listed above and much more that love conceals and carries within itself.

For example, if one considers my attempts over several years to describe love in human language according to my understanding, my inability to reveal all its variety, depth, and breadth becomes evident. I have managed to describe only a small part of the greatness and beauty of love. If volume is used as the measure of comparison, all my accounts are a little puddle within a vast ocean. Yet this meager human knowledge has an advantage. The tiny puddle is connected to the ocean of

God's love, and therefore it will never dry up, never lose its power, and never cease to exist. Perhaps I am diminishing it, but it is better to be humble and continually need God's love than to overestimate my abilities and become self-confident. In any case, I cannot imagine self-confidence in love; such a thing simply cannot exist.

Love contains all the blessings and treasures of Heaven. It brings everything into Heavenly harmony; it is beautiful and calm. Love is like a quiet river whose waters appear very smooth and harmless. When you place an obstacle in its way, it flows around it. You immerse yourself in it, and it hides and absorbs you while allowing you to remain yourself. You build a dam, and the water rises, fills every open space, reaches the edges, pours downward as a waterfall, and calmly continues flowing. A river has no obstacles except fierce frost capable of penetrating to its very depths and binding everything with ice. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. In every other circumstance, love does what God gives it to me to do.

In the gift of love, I receive God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Each of Them abides within me in all His fullness, while leaving me an ordinary human being with my inherent weaknesses, concerns, and needs, but with a completely different consciousness. Life's priorities change, spiritual values come to the forefront of my mind, and I become a truly free person. God receives authority in my heart to write His laws upon it, place right thoughts within it, order my life, protect me in a special way from evil in this world, carry me in His arms, and exert His influence through me. God does not advertise me, but He accomplishes in my life what pleases Him.

Life in love becomes truly romantic and interesting. I love—and it brings such joy; it is so beautiful, so mysterious, and so delightful! Sometimes I ask, "Is this really me?"

God is generous in His gifts, but when He decides to give Himself in response to my desire to possess Him in the gift of love, He studies me very carefully and weighs everything, taking my true motives and needs into account. My thirst to

have God and live in love, my desire to possess this love—all of this, which proceeds from Him, gives me the right and gives Him the authority to satisfy my desire and adorn my life with Himself.

God is great in love. Yet He remains very humble and quiet, awaiting every opportunity to reveal Himself.

Because there is no form or majesty in Him and nothing evident to attract our gaze, the problem arises that we do not understand the full value of this gift of Heaven. Yet love exists; it is eternal and great in its might, although people value it little and do not greatly desire it. But I specifically choose love, becoming its rightful possessor. God clothes me in it and admires what I have become. He shows me to His angels and rejoices over the new masterpiece of His love.

1. Please read Ephesians 3:16-19; John 13:34-35; 1 Peter 1:22; and 1 Corinthians 13:1-8 in the light of this lesson.
2. What did you understand from this lesson?
3. Do you desire to become the possessor of something greater than you that cannot be contained within your consciousness?
4. Do you believe that love is available to everyone who thirsts for it and asks for it?
5. Why does the Lord not give the gift of love indiscriminately to everyone?
6. Why does the Lord desire, more than we do, to give us what we do not desire to receive or ask for?
7. What does a person receive in the gift of love?

## Lesson 13. The Sequence of Receiving Love

Every good undertaking has a plan. This plan shows the sequence of the process, making it possible to see mistakes, miscalculations, gaps, excesses, and deficiencies in advance. It is not difficult for a person to quickly identify a violation when something does not proceed according to plan.

Does God have a plan concerning the reception of love? Yes, and it is clearly presented in chapter 15 of the Gospel of Luke, in the parable of the prodigal son.

This account partially describes the process of maturation itself and the steps that determine the stages of readiness in making decisions.

1. Understanding that your Father is rich and great, and desiring to possess these treasures for your own benefit.
2. Receiving the Father's riches and the freedom to use them at your own discretion. Yet a wrong choice was made and sin was committed.
3. Spiritual poverty and hunger. Realizing a special need for spiritual blessing.
4. Searching for information that satisfies spiritual thirst. Tasting the products offered by the world.
5. I came to myself. (The key word is "I.")
6. Remembering the blessings the Father possesses and comparing that life with the present condition.
7. Making the decision to return to the Father and repent.
8. I arose and went. (The key word is "went.")
9. My acceptance by the Father.
10. My repentance.
11. Receiving all Heavenly blessings, riches, authority, and status.
12. Being misunderstood by relatives and those close to me, and encountering their open hostility and dislike.

Every student in the School of Christ passes through all these stages. This is God's plan for us, for our spiritual formation and

growth. This plan is designed in such a way that harmony cannot be attained by skipping any of the points listed. God desires me to evaluate correctly the potential of my opportunities, the danger of the world, and the power of grace. He desires to see thirst within me as I recognize my spiritual poverty. God seeks to deal not with insane people who are enchanted by the temptations of the world and unaware of the ruinous nature of their condition, but with those who understand what is happening and where they are.

Making a decision is a very good thing. Yet a person may spend an entire lifetime doing nothing, merely dreaming about changes and reflecting upon victories and future achievements. At some point, a person must simply arise and go toward the goal, setting tasks along the way to attain it. Jesus Himself says, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden," making it clear that merely desiring is not enough; action is also necessary. If I have chosen love and its attainment, it is difficult for me to make a mistake and fail to reach the goal. It is like being afraid of missing the ocean when jumping with a parachute.

At the same time, it is very important for me to acknowledge that I am wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked, because this is exactly what I truly am.

My Heavenly Father has long been waiting for me in order to receive me into the embrace of His love and give me more than I ask. He desires to enrich me, clothe me, endow me with authority, and then share a meal with me. Does this parable not remind us of the message to Laodicea?

I will not be able to avoid hostility from those close to me; it will accompany me everywhere. Yet my status in the Father's eyes will support me and protect me from evil.

At some point, I will begin sharing with other people the love of God that I have received, and I will even begin explaining how easily it can be obtained. But before promising something to those near me, I must remember my own path and understand the stage at which my student presently stands.

There will also be those who have a great advantage over me because they have never lived in the world and are pure in their conduct. Yet sin may once have damaged their minds as well. These people also need God's plan of healing, and they too must pass through every stage of restoration in order to receive Heavenly blessings. The Father tells them, "All that I have is thine." Yet something is lacking in these people, and therefore everything does not proceed according to plan.

But publicans and harlots believe in the plan, follow it, and receive.

I do not desire to upset or humiliate anyone, but I ask each person to examine their heart and understand where they are, whether they are upon a dangerous path, and where the Eternal way is, so that they may enter it and walk in it while preserving purity and holiness.

God always has exceptions to the rules, yet there is also a plan of Salvation according to which He acts quite predictably and faithfully in order to save everyone and give love to those who come, ask, and believe.

1. Please read Romans 2:4; Luke 15:11-24; Revelation 3:14-22; and Philippians 2:13 in the light of this lesson.
2. What did you understand from this lesson?
3. At what stage of growth did you see yourself?
4. In what way is the parable similar to the message to Laodicea?
5. Do you believe that the Heavenly Father receives you when you decide to come to Him?
6. What did you like about this lesson?
7. Are you ready for far-reaching changes in your life?

## Lesson 14. Ask, and It Shall Be Given You

I will tell you an example from my life. It is your birthday, and as your friend I have decided to congratulate you and give you a present. While thinking about what to give you, I decide that the greatest and best thing I possess is myself. I make a plan, anticipate your surprise, rejoice over it in my heart, feel excited, and come to you in order to present it all. Words of congratulations, my wishes, and words of blessing are spoken, and then I say, "And now the gift!" Seeing my empty hands, you wait in surprise to discover what it will be. Then I say: "I give you myself. I give you eight hours of my life and my abilities, which you may use at your own discretion during the year until your next birthday, within the bounds of decency and God's law." And I watch you. I am very interested to learn how you will receive it, whether you will be concerned, and how you will decide to use this gift. I give you time to think and return home.

From my experience, I can say that I remained unneeded throughout the entire year, although I knew very well how I could serve these people, because they were involved in a building project and were paying me for my services. Throughout the year, I reminded them of my gift and waited.

What would you do with me, my friend, if I gave you such a gift? Whatever you may answer, I know for certain that when you personally hear such words, the reality of carrying them out will differ from what you are planning now. A living person stands before you, ready to devote part of his life to you. You need only decide and ask me to fulfill what I promised—what I have already given.

Now let us imagine Another Person—our dear Heavenly Friend Jesus. He loved me when I was still a sinner and did not know Him. For my sake He came into this world, died in my place for my sins, rose again, and became available to me at any time. He gave me a great many promises that He is always ready to fulfill, waiting for me to learn about them and begin asking. And

the greatest gift He possesses for me on the day of my spiritual birth is Himself. He gives me not eight hours of His life and services, but all His time and all of Himself for all Eternity. Jesus does not hide from me by turning off His phone. He stands at the door of my heart and knocks, calls, and tenderly reminds me of Himself.

Jesus waits and watches me attentively. He anticipates the joy of an opened door and my desire to have Him. He promises to feed me with something delicious and beneficial. Together with Himself, He offers to give me all His authority and the wisdom to use it.

What does He hear in response? "Oh, how wonderful! How pleasant it is to know this! It is like a life preserver in case of disaster." Is that all? Is this how I answer God's promises? What more can He offer me?

Jesus understood that in our lives we would encounter many difficulties and focus our attention upon them so completely that we would forget all God's promises of help and blessing. Understanding all this, He taught us to seek and find, to ask and receive, and to knock so that the door would be opened to us. This account contains hope of receiving the fullness of love. It is not hidden behind seven seals. It exists and waits to be claimed. Love has already been promised to everyone; it need only be taken.

The question is, "How?" Ask, and it shall be given you. What will be given is a true, Heavenly, Eternal treasure. Love has been promised, commanded, and offered from all God's heart. God Himself is embodied in it in all His fullness and beauty.

I am being watched in order to understand what I will do with this Gift.

What prevents me from asking God to fulfill His promise? My modesty, my unbelief, or my indifference?

Time will tell.

But many of God's promises are conditional because they are limited by a particular period established by the Giver. He calls

this the time of grace, and it will one day end for many of His friends. The validity of the promise will expire, the doors will close forever, and the righteous will continue to practice righteousness on one side of the door while all other people remain outside.

What should I do? “Ask, and it shall be given you” is also a promise of Jesus that gives hope and opens many prospects for growth.

I will return to my experience. When I gave myself, I assumed that my abilities in construction and repair would most likely be needed. But somewhere deep within my soul, I understood that I possessed something more valuable and precious than the ability to work. A hope glowed within my heart that this very thing would be desired. Yet our expectations and dreams are not always fulfilled.

What does God expect from us when He offers Himself?

Love waits for its new possessor. It has given itself for perpetual use. It is very interested to know whether it will be needed and, if so, for what purpose.

1. Please read Jeremiah 33:3; Matthew 7:7-11; Luke 11:5-10; and 1 John 3:23 in the light of this lesson.
2. What did you understand from this lesson?
3. Do you believe that you will certainly receive love if you begin asking God for it?
4. Do you think God will give us what He desires to see within us?
5. Do you expect that you will begin to feel the appearance and manifestation of love within your heart?
6. Why must we ask for it? Why does the Lord not give it freely to everyone without a request?
7. Are there any special prayers for love, or may we ask for it in our own words?

## Lesson 15. The Spiritual World

The spiritual world is invisible to the human eye, but it is just as real as the physical world. It has its own statutes, order, patterns, and mysteries. What takes place in the world of spirits has a direct or indirect influence upon us, and this is always worth remembering. We need to keep the influence of the spiritual world upon us under control.

Satan is mentioned rarely in the books of the Old Testament. They do not attach special significance to his influence; on the contrary, great emphasis is placed upon God's power and human conduct.

In the writings of the New Testament, however, we see a detailed account of the great controversy between Christ and Satan, and between Christians and evil spirits. We should not deny the presence of these invisible powers or diminish their influence. They exist, and they act according to the spiritual laws that give them authority over the human mind. At the same time, they must reckon with the laws that deprive them of strength and influence.

In the world of spirits, there are two opposing armies: the Angels of Light led by Christ and the angels of darkness led by Lucifer. The Bible also calls the latter spiritual wickedness in high places.

Our minds are continually subjected to attacks by evil spirits that seek access to our wills, and the will cannot exist independently. Our will must belong to someone and be closely connected with someone. Two powers desire to possess the human will. The first is Christ, Who gives a new heart. The second is the Flesh—the very sinful nature that we inherit when we are born into this world. And the will chooses to whom it will belong.

Everything that proceeds from my mouth is very carefully examined and weighed in the spiritual world. As a result of this

analysis, authority is given to one spirit or another to act within me. My conduct and deeds reveal which spirit possesses my will, while my true motive shows the spiritual world what drives me and who governs me.

God offers me the gift of salvation through Jesus Christ, and this gift has its own plan and principles. I must hear the Word of God, which gives faith and leads me to an awareness of sin and repentance for it. Repentance and the desire to change for the better, in turn, move me toward choosing the further process of my spiritual growth, made possible through the ordinance of baptism by water in the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This is a kind of marriage vow by which I show the entire spiritual world that from now on I belong to Christ and give God the authority and right to change me, defend me, teach me, protect me, instruct me, love me, discipline me, and exercise a special influence upon my mind and will. Yet I remain a free individual with the right to choose to whom my will will belong. But by virtue of the marriage vow, it now belongs to Christ, and every deviation in the relationship and the choice of another husband is regarded as spiritual adultery and carries serious consequences.

Even after I have entered into the Covenant with God, the enemy of souls has authority to send me temptations and evil thoughts, offering me a choice in that direction, but he cannot force me to sin. Satan continually surrounds me with evil people through whom he can influence my mind and make my life difficult. But I have freedom of choice and Power from above, enabling me to resist every evil and control what influences me. Moreover, I myself can influence those around me and, whenever possible, choose my circle of fellowship.

My morning prayer opens the doors of the Heavenly blessings with which God desires to endow me.

In prayer to God, I express my desire to pass through this day under God's guidance and protection. These are not merely words, but a testimony to the entire invisible world that I belong to Christ on this day.

When I ask for Heavenly love for myself and toward those near me, the world of spirits also hears this request and receives it as a reason for action. God receives the right to change me into His likeness. My words of faith that I have been heard in prayer, together with my gratitude for the answer, sound like a command for the good powers to act. The enemy of souls retreats, knowing that he has lost, but he does not depart forever. He prepares temptations to catch me in his nets, possess my will, and make me his subject in this conflict. And he has an ally in this battle—my carnal nature, which never dies but which I can keep pinned down.

A great controversy is taking place in the spiritual world, and the battlefield lies between my right and left ears. I will serve the one to whom I give my will.

God's love within me is the very power that easily recognizes the enemy, determines the purity and holiness of my thoughts and desires, shows me the correct way out, and helps me make right decisions quickly. I belong to God, and agape love is His seal upon my consciousness. It allows nothing unclean to possess me.

But this Heavenly treasure is kept in the weak vessel of my soul so that the supernatural power of love may be attributed not to me but to God. I am not the ocean or the source of agape, but in the hands of Jesus I can be the one through whom this ocean becomes available to other people.

Love is not merely a power from above; it is the Mighty God within me.

My prayer for love gives God authority to abide within me, change my mind in accordance with God's law, and win victories in spiritual battles, thereby making me an overcoming Christian.

The prayer of faith sounds like the voice of this victory that has overcome the world.

By choosing love, I challenge all the forces of evil, and they become greatly enraged against me and answer this challenge.

I begin a war that will never end, and I must understand this. But within me is the One Who has conquered in this war. His Name is Jesus, and His power is Love!

1. Please read Revelation 12:7-12; Ephesians 6:10-13; 1 Peter 5:8-9; and Job 1:1-22 in the light of our lesson.
2. What did you understand from this lesson?
3. Do you believe in the existence of the spiritual world, which is invisible to us?
4. What will the knowledge of the existence of spirits bring me?
5. Does the enemy of souls desire to keep his existence secret? What does he gain from this?
6. Will the Lord protect His children from every kind of evil?
7. Does my faith play any role in the spiritual world?

## Lesson 16. The Beginning of Trials

Let us imagine the following scene. I have decided to take up Greco-Roman wrestling—not merely to attend training sessions at a local club, but with the intention of becoming the champion of every possible championship and the Olympic Games. Does this sound amusing? Perhaps to you, but not to me. I have a goal. I have set it and decided to attain it. I prepared a training plan, found the best coach, who had previously trained participants for the Olympic Games, agreed upon payment for his services, learned about upcoming championships, and submitted applications to participate. Then I began preparing for the competitions.

I made it clear to my coach that my intentions were serious, and together we prepared a training plan.

The coach examined my physical build and took me to a clinic, where various blood tests and every kind of other test were performed. He tested my strength and endurance, after which he established a daily routine and diet for me and assigned my first training sessions.

After the first lessons, I was somewhat disappointed. My coach told me about the structure and laws of my body, the functioning of the muscles and heart, their interaction with the entire body, the dangers of excessive strain, and much more. He made me write down these lessons and reflect upon the new knowledge I had received. Between the theoretical lessons, my instructor held short training sessions with light physical exertion.

I thought he would entrust me with exercise machines set to their maximum levels and that I would train upon them to exhaustion day and night. Instead, the coach taught me to rest properly, devote time to spiritual values, eat correctly, abstain from harmful things, be temperate in beneficial things, avoid stress, drink enough pure water, spend more time in sunlight,

live and work in fresh air, and attend the training sessions he conducted.

I began to notice that the strain upon my muscles increased with every training session and that my arms and legs hurt. After each session I felt completely exhausted, and sometimes I wanted to run away from it all.

Then the day came when my coach brought in an opponent and led us onto the mat. He briefly explained the rules of wrestling and set the time. With the arrogance of a future champion, I looked at my young partner and felt sorry for him. But when I entered the contest with him at the signal, to my surprise I quickly found myself pinned down. This greatly upset me. I gathered all my strength, yet when the next bout began, my young friend easily threw me down and won. My heart was broken. All my dreams and plans collapsed in a single moment. I sat there devastated, not knowing what to do.

My coach sat beside me, placed his hand upon my shoulder, and calmly explained that my defeat had been predictable and natural because I had wrestled against the city champion. My instructor assured me that the process had only begun and that I should not lose heart at the beginning of the journey. What followed would be even more interesting and difficult. Thus began days of endless training and instruction.

At any time, I could stop training and leave; the door was always open. But I had chosen the goal and continued toward it.

My coach explained the rules of wrestling to me in detail, polished various movements and holds, paired me with other students, and, while offering me a choice of combat tactics, made me do many things I did not want to do. I began to understand the science of wrestling, its subtleties and distinctive qualities. I understood that I was not yet ready for championships, but I knew that I would have to participate in them. During the training process, I understood the importance of self-discipline and perseverance in overcoming obstacles. I was taught not to become involved in any conflicts and to avoid

unnecessary confrontations. I knew where the local hooligans gathered, but I deliberately avoided those places.

Time passed, and I learned a great deal. I saw the close connection between my spirit, soul, and body. I began to understand that in every battle, the interaction of all my strength, experience, and knowledge is important. The tactics of combat became clear to me, enabling me to anticipate my opponent's actions and meet them with my ability to resist. Knowledge of special holds and combat techniques helped me wrestle successfully and win victories. But I was no longer proud, because I understood that my arrogance would become a trap for me, since my opponents were stronger than I. My coach always came to my aid and told me what to do, thereby placing his knowledge within my mind.

Ahead of me were the Olympic Games, which no longer seemed so simple and desirable, because I understood that the best of the best participated in them and that the prize went to only one.

In using this illustration, friends, I am not calling you to take up professional sports. I am seeking to draw clear parallels between our principles and laws and those of the world of sports. We are studying in the School of Love, where we encounter experienced opponents who are ready to enter into battle with us and overcome us. Yet they desire not merely to defeat us, but to steal, kill, destroy, disappoint us, and ruin our lives. Our enemy makes no concessions and does not yield in battle. He possesses centuries of experience in battles and victories. And he wants our souls.

But our Coach is Jesus. He has not lost a single battle or suffered a single defeat. He knows the enemy by sight, knows all his techniques, and teaches us to fight according to His rules. During training, Jesus allows me to fall and lose in order to show me my weak points and cleanse my heart from all unrighteousness. He explains the theory to me and accompanies me into practical training. Jesus continually reminds me of the rules of combat and the laws of the victor. He endows me with His love so that in its light I may, whenever

possible, avoid the places where hooligans gather and not enter into unnecessary conflicts. Ahead of me are the contest involving the three angels and the apocalyptic Olympic Games, whose beginning will be announced by a loud cry and the long-awaited law concerning special worship of the prince of this world.

For now, my Teacher invites me to training. He explains the relationship between His spirit and mine, my soul, and my body; teaches me the mysteries of love and its way of fighting; prepares me for victory; and prepares a place for me in the house of His Father—our Father. Jesus will even grant the overcomers a place upon His throne.

Until the final battle begins, Jesus teaches me and continually comes to sup with me so that He may eat delicious and beneficial food with me. We partake of it together—I with Him, and He with me.

Then He takes me by the hand and leads me into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil, without leaving me without His protection.

1. Please read 1 Corinthians 9:24-27 and Matthew 10:24 in the light of this lesson.
2. What did you understand from this lesson?
3. What benefit did you personally receive from what you read?
4. Do you have a Teacher of love Whose example you can follow?
5. What should you do when you lack the strength to become strong?
6. Is it worthwhile to begin studying in this School and continue until you learn love?
7. Do you think you will receive from God what you came to this School to learn?

## Lesson 17. Love Cleanses the Heart

And so I begin to recognize my need for God's love, and my faith grows stronger. The more I reflect upon love, the stronger my thirst becomes. My entire human nature reaches toward Jesus as the Source of love. I call upon Him, and He hears and answers me.

With what joy Heaven watches me! What rejoicing fills the hearts of the angels! One more person will become like Jesus in love. I am under the special protection of God's grace, and it begins to change my heart, in which something beautiful and unusual will now appear—something I expect by faith. These are the holy feelings, the true love, through which God will tenderly respond to the actions of those near me. What joy! My soul longs for battle and victories!

And now the challenge has been issued. I boldly enter the battle and... confidently fall into the mud. A storm of emotions sobers me. I am confused. I continue and stumble over my sins again. Now I am no longer so confident in my strength. Shame and despair overflow my heart. I feel that I have betrayed God's trust, and my soul sinks into the darkness of a dark forest. I see the path and know the goal, but darkness lies ahead, and I do not desire to retreat. I cry out to God, but shame makes my tongue speechless. Disgrace becomes my covering. I remember God's promises of forgiveness and repent with the hope of being accepted. It becomes easier; I continue, stumble again, and fall. My heart is broken. I do not want to see anyone or learn anything. I understand nothing except that I am a sinner who needs a Savior. Yet I have been in the church for so many years, carry out a ministry, and have a position and responsibilities. People look to me expecting spiritual instruction. But I am crushed and reevaluating all my values. I am so ashamed!

Faith in God and His mercy sustains me. I feel His hand and trust His goodness. But a defiled conscience torments my soul. I

am a traitor, because I have so greatly failed my Heavenly Friend. Now I timidly ask for love, hoping that I will be heard because the Lord promised this gift and gave it. I now remain silent when facing attacks. Meekness of heart becomes my best defense. I reassess my condition and give everything to Jesus, not knowing what to do next. Yet life must continue. And so I continue without any special emotions.

How good it would be to meet someone who could explain to me what is happening. I pray for love, yet impurity comes out of my heart. I decide to love my neighbor, yet my tongue strikes that person. I desire to think about the happiness of others, yet my eyes see them as sinners who are repulsive to me. Resentment toward the world has wrapped me in darkness.

Who will help me? O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I read what Paul experienced when describing his condition in chapter 7 of Romans, and I see myself. But faith in Jesus helps me continue. I drag myself through the dark forest, hoping that one day all this will end.

My friends do not understand what is happening to me. They have not yet experienced anything similar. Not knowing how to help me, they pray for me and remind me of God's precious promises. Oh, who could help me see what is happening to me? I read the Bible and find comfort and hope in Solomon's books, yet my soul remains dark. I pray and believe that it will become better and that this too will pass.

Then I remember a friend who speaks a great deal about love, and I decide to ask him my question. He looks at me joyfully and explains that in this way the Lord is cleansing me in order to free my heart for love, which cannot live in filth. Love does not share its throne with sin and vice. It is love that places me under the pressure of trials and, as though squeezing a tube, presses out all my evil thoughts and habits. They do not return if I give this mountain of cares to Jesus. My task is to bring all this property of mine to Christ in exchange for what He offers me. Hope ignites within my heart. I begin to understand that everything is not so bad. It turns out that this is God's plan for

my spiritual growth and cleansing. I leave all my ambitions in the dark forest and continue by faith.

How good it is when there are people who explain everything at the right time, support us, give us hope, and point out the way. If there is a person in your life who continually speaks to you about love, rejoice that you have such a friend. That person will be able to help you in many ways.

At last, I see light in my forest. I go toward it, and it receives me kindly and becomes part of my soul. I look back upon the path I have traveled and understand that in this forest I left behind much of what had been pulling my ship to the bottom and preventing me from living happily.

I bow in reverence before God and thank Him deeply for these trials, for the cleansing, and for always remaining near and carrying me in His arms.

I am no longer the person I once was, although I have the same name and appearance. Something new has taken place within me, through which I have become cleaner. From now on, I do not boast in my sins as I did before, but work out my salvation in meekness, the fear of God, and humility. I am struck, but it does not hurt me. I am attacked, but I do not respond in the same way. And I understand that I love. Previously I could not even imagine how wonderful it is not to return evil for evil or railing for railing. I did not realize that everything can be endured with meekness of spirit while desiring good for people.

Suddenly I begin to understand that Jesus also traveled this path, that this is what He taught, and that I am simply following in His footsteps and becoming like Him. It turns out to be so simple and so wonderful. Such an experience must certainly be shared. I run to my friends and tell them about my discovery, but they look at me with pity. They do not understand me and believe that I have again fallen into some kind of extreme.

But I love! And I desire so greatly to share it! How wonderful! How interesting! What will happen next?

1. In the light of our lesson, please read James 1:2–4. Compare these verses with the Kulakov translation, which says: “My brothers, whenever various trials fall to your lot, consider it a joy and know that through the testing of your faith you acquire perseverance. And perseverance must reach its full development in you, so that you may become mature people, whole in character, lacking nothing.”
2. What did you understand from the subject of this lesson?
3. Have you already experienced a similar trial when praying for the gift of love?
4. Does such a condition of the soul frighten you?
5. Do you believe that God’s love is available to you as well?
6. Did Jesus give us an example of how we should love people?
7. Do we always succeed in loving someone on the first attempt?

## Lesson 18. Love Is Not Feelings and Emotions

By promising to show me great and hidden things, the Lord makes it clear that these are things I do not know. I ask Him for love and pray for this gift of Heaven. It seems that I have at least an approximate idea of what it is, yet I cannot understand how love will act in my heart, what will happen to me, how I will behave, and much more. Of course, I have certain expectations and ideas because I have read much about love. I know people who love. It is so good and peaceful to be with them.

I imagine that special feelings and emotions will overflow me, making me very happy and so joyful that nothing will be able to cast even a shadow of sadness upon me. This is exactly what I expect from love. After all, it is love. And love smiles.

I pray with a smile upon my lips and joy in my heart. I believe, believe, believe that I will possess this Heavenly treasure. I read books and articles about love. As I study the Bible, I see how much is written about it. The thirteenth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians contains an entire poem about love, which I dream of possessing very soon. And perhaps something like this has already settled within my heart.

I wait, pray, believe, and study. I notice that all my open and secret sins begin to manifest and express themselves very clearly. Those closest to me, from whom I cannot escape, become very unreasonable in their behavior. Many of my plans collapse. Life becomes one continuous battlefield with myself and with the people closest to me. It appears that the entire world has risen against me. I feel shame for my sins and pain when I am betrayed and hated. I am astonished because people's hypocrisy and false smiles become evident to me.

Despite this, I continue to pray, asking for God's blessing upon myself and others and pleading for Heavenly love and the forgiveness of sins.

The people closest to me cause me unimaginably severe emotional pain, yet I feel sorry for them. I have no anger toward them and no desire to take revenge or respond in the same way. As I offer prayers for myself and for these people, I understand how dear they are to me—far too dear for me to cause them pain in return. Yet instead of joy, I begin to worry that I may have answered them badly or thought something wrong about them, and therefore grieved God and betrayed His trust. Although I recognize my impurity and that I am still far from love, I do not lose faith that God loves and trains me.

Peace fills my heart through the understanding of such love from God. I know how greatly I now need the power to love, and I ask for it. As I ask, I receive. My heart becomes calm; I repent and come to myself. Although I have nothing over which to rejoice and am ashamed to boast, something special in this love keeps me from losing my mind in such trials. Suddenly I begin to understand that I am becoming cleaner, that all the filth that has come out of me does not return, and that all these difficult and evil people are given to test me and teach me to love them.

Gradually I come to understand that love is preparing a place for itself within my heart by cleansing it. Trials of faith no longer frighten me. I even ask for them, if only the Lord will show me my sin. He answers, sometimes in such a way that I am horrified by myself. But there is no longer fear; there is a desire to run quickly to Jesus with it and ask Him to remove my iniquity and correct my heart. The Lord receives me, forgives me, and gives me power not to sin.

Through my own experience, I now know how God's grace works within me, healing my soul. The process of salvation from the dominion of sin becomes understandable to me.

In my eyes, the cruel people close to me no longer appear so evil, because I see how unhappy they are in their unbelief. I feel very sorry for them, and I pray for these people to be forgiven because they know not what they do.

I choose love, and it comes, filling my mind and giving me a clear understanding of what should and should not be done. I know that something very unusual is taking place within me—something not temporary, but very strong and constant. I begin to experience the power of love and now go forward myself to meet the inevitable conflict. My new gift remains with me. Love does not disappear, but behaves very wisely and does not surrender.

Sometimes, out of habit, I try to solve my problems in a human way and immediately understand that I am losing. Then I ask for love, and it immediately intervenes, while I understand how I should behave correctly.

This amazing love is not expressed in stormy emotions or in any special feelings and experiences. It is within me, but I cannot explain it in words. It is woven so completely into my consciousness and feelings that I cannot distinguish where I am and where love is. Love has dissolved within me and become one with me, yet sometimes I do not even recognize it, because I am the same person, but already different—completely different.

I want to express it with a smile, but that is not it. I want to speak it in words, but I cannot find the right words. I try to display emotions of delight, but everything somehow appears false. I become calm. I take the Bible and, as I read, see that Jesus loved and treated people in exactly the same way as I do in my new experience. His conduct and attitude toward people were very tactful, respectful, principled, gentle and firm, tender and just. I notice that this same character is beginning to appear within me. I am becoming like my Savior. I study the life of Jesus even more attentively and begin to notice details and small things. I begin to hear His voice addressing me personally from the pages of the Bible. The God of love becomes for me the God of Love in all His manifestations. I fall in love with my Heavenly Father and His Beloved Son. My irresistible desire is to learn more about this amazing love and comprehend its depth, and the Bible gives me an answer and satisfies this thirst for knowledge. I see God's love in everything: in sacrifices,

judgments, the law, rules, care for people, and the Plan of Salvation. But most importantly, I see it within myself. I begin to understand that this is not feelings and emotions, but the Lord Jesus Himself within my heart. Feelings of gratitude for this Gift of Heaven overflow me, and my emotions express Heavenly joy and delight in inexpressible cries of happiness. I desire so greatly to share this, to love, and to speak about it. What a fire!

I go to my friends with this message, but they ask me to show them works. At first I am confused, because God is Love within me. But the answer is, "Show us the works."

I become calm and search for the correct answer. I understand that the works will come; love is action. And when the works of love are manifested, I see that not everyone wants to experience its action personally.

I look back upon the path I have traveled, which could be described very quickly. Yet how many tears had to be shed along this path, and how much loss and suffering had to be endured. How much time was required to assemble this puzzle called "God's love within the human being."

I already know in part what it means to love. I cried out, and God answered; He showed me, and I saw. It truly is something great and hidden that I do not know but am trying to understand. And this hidden thing has become mine forever, for all Eternity.

It is so wonderful and simple, yet at the same time mysterious and very complex. Now try to understand it. But this request is worth crying out to God for.

1. Please read Philippians 1:9; 2:5; 1 John 4:17; Proverbs 31:18; Luke 6:41; and Hebrews 5:14 in the light of this lesson.
2. Please share your hope and expectations concerning your studies in this School.
3. Please tell us what was revealed to you in this lesson.

4. Read Ephesians 3:20-21. What power is Paul writing about in this passage? Do you believe that this power belongs to you as well?
5. What role do feelings play in a person's life?
6. What will a person become if that person has no feelings?
7. Are feelings a reliable adviser?

## Lesson 19. My Ideas About Love and Reality

The world in which we live exerts a certain influence upon each of us. The society in which we grew up formed our understanding of many things and values; it shaped our mentality and way of thinking. I see this difference in thinking and in the scale of values very clearly when I move to another country or republic.

The understanding of God's Love, given to this world as a great treasure for sinful humanity, has also undergone significant changes. Human sciences, the mass media, and godless philosophy have lowered the concept of love to such a base, animal level that everything intimate and personal is displayed publicly in the smallest detail. Love has been clothed in a pink heart and transformed into a way of life for weaklings, into sex, and into every kind of perversion.

The words "I love" are used to express passionate desire, interest, or attachment toward everyone and everything a person likes. With such concepts written within my heart, I begin asking God for love, while somewhere deep within my soul imagining an encounter with something tenderly pink, soft and fluffy like a kitten, kind and affectionate, smiling and welcoming. In theory, this is how it should be—but not in this world. Yet somewhere in the depths of my subconscious, I still expect something similar from those near me whom I decide to love.

The world has an unwritten law: a tooth for a tooth, an eye for an eye, and love for love—that is, you give to me, and I give the same to you. This understanding has become firmly rooted in my mind. When I begin asking God for love, and sometimes even without prayer decide to treat those near me with love, I receive it and see how it acts, giving all of me to people and overturning all my ideas about it. In response, I expect similar treatment, because I love and do good, and it is customary to repay good with good. I move to a new level of thinking and

decide to fill my life with virtue. I hasten to do good, and I enjoy it. In a certain sense, I even become a volunteer in order to establish myself in selfless service to those near me. My expectations are partially fulfilled. Even when opening a school of goodness and love, somewhere in my soul I expect recognition and respect for such a good undertaking. And this comes, because the good seed sown with love and goodness springs up and bears abundant fruit in the hearts of those near me in the form of smiles, affectionate words, friendship, support, gratitude, mutual understanding, and love in return. All this is from God. We were created by God to love. There is nothing wrong with the expectations described; Eternity is arranged in this way—to repay goodness with love and love with greater love. Friends, do not depart from this path.

But what happens in reality? Love sobers me because I see my ideas about it shatter against the rocks of human selfishness, pride, lust, love of pleasure, covetousness, and idolatry. In response to my love, I often “receive a blow to the head” in the form of streams of evil, hatred, and hostility that come crashing down upon me from every side, including from people dear to me, whose persistent indifference and obvious hostility discourage me. Where does this come from? Is this how my love should be repaid? I am speaking not about distant acquaintances, but about those who are friends, very close to me, dear to me, and related to me by blood.

At first, it is very difficult to understand myself. Resentment pursues me, and I withdraw, close myself off, and desire to do nothing for anyone.

But the Holy Spirit tenderly asks whether I desire to learn something. He directs me to Calvary and then asks what I see. I look upon the crucified Christ, remember His life filled with love, goodness, and light, and become deeply ashamed. Much immediately appears in its true light. I come to myself and repent, no longer expecting anything good from people. I look to God, desiring to see and hear only His approval. I understand why I need the power of love in all its fullness and depth. Without it, I am simply incapable of doing anything good for my

neighbor. I will not be able to reveal love through myself. The greatest thing I can do without God is obtain a kind little dog for companionship, friendship, and mutual love. Yet even in such speechless creatures, the action of the Eternal principle of agape is evident, because the loyalty of these animals and their selfless love unto death can teach me much and partly reveal the power of this gift. Animals, however, do not possess freedom of choice. Instincts have been placed within them, and these guide them. They do not possess what belongs to human beings: will, reason, and intellect. It is through these qualities of the soul that God works with a person.

I do not desire to intensify the darkness. Everything is not so gray and dark. Love works miracles even in the hearts of selfish people. It is given to kindle light in this gloomy world, so that the true beauty of God's character may be revealed to people through me, so that through this those near me may receive hope for a better life, so that their minds may be drawn to Jesus, and through Him they may receive the gift of salvation. Love is given to show the visible and invisible worlds the holiness of God's law, which can be obeyed in the spirit of love. People must see that even now it is possible to possess all the blessings God has promised.

I write this to you so that when you encounter the spirit of selfishness and darkness, you will not become disappointed or lose heart. Satan still exists. Sin still has a place in our world. Demons move everywhere, seeking someone to tempt. But thanks to God and the ministry of the Good Angels, we are alive, protected, and able to learn many good things from Jesus.

Love is struggle and victory. Love has already overcome this world. It is above all the world's ambitions. It exists, and it is available to everyone who asks the Heavenly Father for it with the faith of a child. Such a person will receive love in the Name of Jesus.

1. Please read Psalm 109:2-5.
2. Please share whether you have experienced in your life something similar to what David describes. If so, what way out did you find from this situation?

3. Does verse 4 give you a clue about what to do?
4. Read Psalm 119:42, 51, 61, 69, 71, and 95. Do you find a reflection of your own experiences in these verses?
5. Please share with me what you understood from this lesson.
6. Read Colossians 3:14. What perfections are being discussed here?
7. Do you believe that agape love is available to everyone?

## Lesson 20. Love Is a Relationship

God is Love. Love cannot live in solitude. A solitary God cannot be Love. Perfect love is present only where there is someone else equal to you in reason, intellect, nature, and every other respect. It is precisely in relationships with equals that a manner of conduct and a way of thinking are formed that, amid a diversity of opinions and ideas, help people find points of contact through which even differing views of various situations do not lead to conflicts and disagreements.

God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit have fellowship with One Another as Equals throughout all Eternity. This was so before us and will remain so while we exist. I can say with confidence that They love One Another. Love is the only way of relating to another free person in which no conflict arises even when there are differences and viewpoints do not coincide on one matter or another. Perfect Love and harmony are embedded in the relationships within the Divine Trinity. Within It are absolute unity and mutual understanding. The Divine Persons are moved by one common purpose in governing the Universe, and Each performs His part in agreement with the Others.

The entire Universe is founded upon the principle of love, which joins the impossible and incompatible and transforms them into something beautiful, harmonious, and Eternal.

A solitary God cannot be Love.

At the same time, although the relationship between creation and the Creator, or between the Creator and creation, rests upon the laws of love, it cannot be called love between equals, because God is great. He is above us and is a mystery to us. Our love for God is shaped by many aspects of a relationship within the framework of "Higher and lower." Our equality is conditional at the few points where we come into contact. We cannot fully comprehend God and His nature by becoming

equal to Him in every respect. Yet we know that He loves us and expects something similar from us.

Suppose I am a person who has somehow created a tiny creature. I have placed my whole soul into this masterpiece of my creativity, endowing it with the ability to think, communicate, and understand, and giving it feelings and emotions. I know what it thinks about. I have given this tiny creature an awareness of freedom and have become its friend. But whatever our relationship may be, I always remain above my little creature; I will always be a mystery to it. My love for it is not a love between equals because I surpass it in everything. But a person equal to me in intellect and abilities opens the possibility of a relationship on the same level. If perfect love exists between me and people equal to me, and I know its nature and possibilities well, it is not difficult for me to treat the tiny creature with the same love. In order for it to understand my love, I create another tiny creature similar to it but different from it, so that together, through their relationship with one another, they may learn to manifest complete harmony and unity amid an absolute diversity of thoughts and feelings. Having my own experience of loving a person equal to me, I teach them to love one another. Then I expect the spirit of love, similar to my own, to be manifested in these creatures toward me as well. If they live in arguments and disagreements, hostility and envy, while declaring their love for me, then as their creator, without rejecting my creatures, I begin teaching them friendship. I make it clear that as long as hostility toward another remains in their soul, this hostility is also directed toward me. This is a spirit of rebellion that must not dwell in the heart.

God does not expect love toward Him from me until He sees my love for people who are equal to me. He knows that I cannot possess such a perfect gift while having a sinful nature expressed through selfishness. This is why God gave all of us to one another, so that through our relationships we may discover unity in diversity, as well as respect, mutual understanding, friendship, and love. The unwritten laws of relationships are

open to all people, and we see that these principles are generally similar in every culture and nation.

But God desires to teach me perfect love toward those near me and to teach them the same love toward me. God Himself seeks to become the Teacher of this Heavenly power within my heart and mind. The laws of love must be understandable to me. At the same time, they must become part of my soul so that in my relationships with those near me they may find practical application and points of contact leading to harmony. When a selfish person accepts God's plan of Salvation from the dominion of sin and selfishness through faith in Jesus Christ, all this becomes possible.

God offers me this gift of love on a voluntary basis on my part. He desires to teach me to use it by writing love within my mind and heart.

I do not have the strength to accomplish this by myself. Without the Heavenly Teacher, I am incapable of comprehending the depth of God's love and successfully manifesting it toward those near me. Although this is a mystery, it is available to everyone who desires to solve it and make it their own. But only God reveals this mystery to my heart.

Those near me are the people who will teach me the practical application of the science of love. Using various methods and techniques, they will polish my knowledge and bring it to perfection. They are my impartial teachers and uncompromising examiners.

Everyone, from small children to feeble elderly people, is intent upon bringing my God-given love to perfection and helping it become established within me, so that this love may act toward them consistently.

It is very difficult for me to become accustomed to this, but by repeatedly reviewing the material I have studied, I am transformed into a person within whom God's love becomes an unceasing source of blessing for me and for those near me.

Only when Eternal love characterizes my relationships with those near me can I boldly declare my love for God, and He will accept it because He Himself taught me this love.

1. Please read 1 John 4:20; 5:3; Proverbs 10:12; 15:17; 27:5; and Romans 5:5-8 in the light of this lesson.
2. Please share what you understood from this lesson. Do you have any questions about this subject?
3. Explain why it is necessary to love one's neighbor first and then God.
4. Are there people near you toward whom you feel open hostility or disgust? Do you see a way out of this situation?
5. Why do I need someone equal to me in reason in order to love?
6. Will God accept my love for Him if I do not love those near me?
7. Can I manifest love for God through relationships of love with those near me?

## Lesson 21. Learning to Love

Let us consider the example of an ordinary educational institution and what takes place there. At an early age, a child goes to school and enters the first grade. The learning process begins. Various subjects are explained to the child, and assignments are given to determine how correctly the child has understood and mastered everything. The child is given the opportunity to make independent decisions while completing one assignment or another. At the end of the school year, the student completes tests or takes examinations in the subjects studied and, after being evaluated, advances to the next grade. When I hear that a person has completed a certain grade, I already have an idea of the level of knowledge that person has attained.

Vocational schools and institutions of higher education help students obtain a focused education and master a profession or specialty in the field they have chosen.

For example, when a student enrolls in a police academy, upon graduating, the student receives a diploma and has the opportunity to work in law enforcement. Accordingly, a cook works in a kitchen, a medical worker as an orderly or physician, a bricklayer as a builder, and so forth.

Every educational institution has entrance examinations. After successfully passing them, the applicant's information is entered into the list of students, the appropriate subjects begin to be taught, and assignments are given that the student must complete and submit. Upon completing the course of study, the graduate receives a diploma and legal status to work in the profession for which that person studied. If someone decides simply to listen to the course and take the examination without enrolling in the educational institution, then after completing the studies and receiving the knowledge, that person remains without an educational diploma and has no legal right to work

lawfully in the chosen profession when a diploma and specialty are required for admission to that type of work.

Let us consider the same principle in the spiritual sphere. Does God have requirements in teaching a person the science of Salvation so that the person may inherit the Eternal Kingdom? Yes. They are written in the Bible and expressed in the teaching of Jesus. John 3:3, 5-7 says: "Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God... Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again."

Certain conditions exist in the spiritual world: accepting baptism by water as a sign of the Covenant with God and being born again for Spiritual life. These are only the initial requirements for a person's education to begin. Anyone who ignores them cannot be considered a student. Such a person remains close to the School, having the right to receive knowledge and participate in certain aspects of church life, but no more. In the eyes of Heaven, such a believer has not fulfilled the conditions for receiving salvation and may be lost. The next conditions are faith in Jesus and knowledge of His teaching, obedience to God's commandments, reception of the fullness of God's grace for victory over sin, and receiving the Power of the Holy Spirit for further growth.

All these processes of learning and spiritual growth take place sequentially, while the desires and abilities of each person are taken into account. If a student dies physically during spiritual education, that person's further development is postponed until the resurrection at the Second Coming of Christ. After this event, the education continues according to the established order.

Knowledge of the science of Salvation does not descend upon a person's life in a single moment. It must be mastered through effort and comprehended by applying the mind.

The School of Agape Love is a new educational institution with no counterpart in the world, and you and I, friends, are pioneers of this science in this form.

God the Father is the Owner and Director of this School. The Holy Spirit and Christ are the Spiritual Mentors Who reveal the meaning and depth of agape love during the learning process. The Lord Jesus is the Teacher. The instructor is the one who writes the lessons and assignments for you. Your examiners and those who test your knowledge are your relatives and those close to you—the people you meet every day in order to strengthen your theoretical knowledge through practice. Like every other educational institution, our School provides that during the learning process, every student will master precisely the agape love that we teach here. The student will receive the power that we study in this School. Heavenly authority will grant such a student legal status for admission to particular trials and kinds of work. The diploma of graduation from the educational institution and of acquiring the gift of Agape Love is God's seal, which the Angels place upon the student's consciousness.

Agape love is a very powerful and complex instrument of God for obtaining spiritual victories. In all its fullness, it is entrusted only to those who thirst to receive it for the purpose of waging war, who are prepared to buy it from Christ as gold tried in the fire and oil for the lamp, giving in exchange their spiritual, fleshly values and ambitions. God desires to teach the science of love to everyone who thirsts, and He does this confidently, precisely, and continually.

We are upon a battlefield. Dangers deadly to soul and body surround us, and various discoveries and trials await us. Only Love within the heart is able to overcome all this by standing firm, taking hold, and conquering. Special advantages in receiving unique gifts and privileges in the Heavenly Kingdom are promised to the one who overcomes.

Love and the Word of God within the heart are the victor's weapons.

Have a blessed journey, friends.

1. Please read Matthew 23:8-10; 1 Corinthians 6:14; 1 Peter 1:5-8; and Galatians 5:6 in the light of this lesson.
2. Why does the Bible call Christ's followers disciples? Read 2 Corinthians 3:2-5.
3. Please share how you imagine the School of Christ and what requirements and order exist within it.
4. In your understanding and for you personally, what status and purpose does this School of Love have?
5. Do you believe that through studying in this School you will know the love of Christ in your personal life and experience?
6. What did you understand from this lesson?
7. How long do you plan to study in the School of Agape Love?

## Lesson 22. Jesus Loves You

We are accustomed to hearing words about God's love, yet we do not even reflect upon the depth of the love that God manifests toward each of us. More than anything, He desires us to see this and live with this understanding.

The realization of God's love, His forgiveness, His acceptance, His understanding of everything happening to me, and His desire to help me—all this brings peace to the soul and gives hope for something better and more beautiful.

The enemy of souls knows the power of God's love. He understands how it captivates a person, and therefore desires to divert our gaze from the Eternal and Great God by drawing our attention to everything else—to what is insignificant and small—and making the small thing the main thing. Unfortunately, the enemy succeeds in doing this.

It is written, "God is love." Love cannot refrain from loving. It is constant like the sun; it is visible in everything surrounding me.

I was created by Love for love. This law is embedded within every cell of my body. Every atom of my body lives for the benefit and happiness of other atoms and cells. My body has been created by Love in such a unique way that it knows by itself what to do, how to remain healthy, how to fight illness, how to free itself from toxins and waste, how to govern my feelings, and how to influence my thoughts. My task is to create ideal conditions for my body. When the laws of happiness and health are observed, the body will function beautifully and give me many hormones of joy. Only love, embedded within my nature at the level of law, is capable of doing this.

When I come into contact with the natural world, I see how beautiful and harmonious it is. How wisely everything has been designed, how beautiful, amazing, and mysterious everything is. And all this was created by Love for me. Nature lives according to the laws of love. It gives in order to receive and, having

received, gives again. Love is a continual process of relationships among all created beings for one another's benefit.

Sin destroyed the harmony of love. It brought illness, suffering, and death. It destroys everything it touches. Sin brings chaos and devastation. It has no meaning, no explanation, and no justification. Where sin exists, there are darkness and misery.

But God loves this world so greatly that He decided to give His Son forever, so that whoever believes in Him should not perish in sin but have Eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ. In Christ, God visibly demonstrated His love and revealed His character to humanity. He refuted every prejudiced opinion about Himself by manifesting the perfect Agape Love of which His heart was capable. He gave humanity the law of His love, which is the union of mercy and justice. Jesus receives everyone who comes to Him, because a very high price was paid for every soul. Through this, humanity was placed in an extremely favorable position and now has the right to salvation if it accepts the conditions.

In all His greatness, Jesus loves me personally. He loves me as greatly as He surpasses me. Jesus watches me attentively, and every movement of my thoughts or words toward Him gives Christ an opportunity to do something good and pleasant for me. The very fact that the Savior gives me freedom of choice and does not restrict it speaks of His loving heart, filled with deep respect for me. Otherwise, Jesus would not act this way. God could command me to believe in Him and love Him in return, and I would submit to that word. But He does not act this way. He tenderly offers Himself and waits. He waits a long time. He waits for some throughout their entire lives but never receives them. He waits for those who believe in Him but do not believe in His love and do not know Him. He waits for those who pray to Him but do not receive the answers to their prayers and run away in fear.

Sometimes I compare our world to an aquarium. I have created every condition necessary for the fish to live. I planted vegetation, placed various stones and structures for shelter,

installed equipment to purify the water, fill it with oxygen, and maintain the necessary temperature. I purchased special food, established the amount and feeding time, and give the fish food at the proper time. But whenever I approach the aquarium to admire its inhabitants, they swim away from me in fear or pay no attention to me. They are more interested in the food than in me. Yet despite all this, I continue caring for them and thinking about their happiness, nourishment, and well-being. Then I suddenly see that the fish have become sick and have begun pursuing and devouring the weak. I desire to help them, reveal the laws of love to them, and teach them these laws. In order for my love to become understandable to the unhappy and cruel fish, I must become one of them. Would I make such a sacrifice? Hardly. But God did. He not only became One of us, but also died for us so that we could receive salvation from the dominion of sin and live forever. Before His death, He commanded us to love one another as He loves us. He LOVES us!

But my mind is closed and incapable of comprehending this. This is why the Lord seeks those who will understand and receive Him and who will be able, through their love, to show God's love to those near them. Having received this gift from a friend, a person will see the Savior, Who is Love.

Do I believe in God's love for me? Do I live with the joy of realizing His love? It is difficult to answer. I am so very busy. But He asks me to stop and know Him—to know that He is God and that He is Love.

1. Please read Romans 5:6-10; Jeremiah 31:3; Luke 12:32; John 14:23; and 16:27 in the light of this lesson.
2. What did you understand from this lesson?
3. Do you understand the depth of God's love for you?
4. Could you express your understanding of God's love in simple words?
5. Do you pray for our School of Agape Love and its participants?
6. Do you rejoice that Jesus loves you?
7. What does God's love give a person?

## Lesson 23. What Distinguishes the Disciples from the World

We read in John 13:35: “By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another.”

These words were spoken by Christ immediately before His death. They relate to the commandment to love one another. God desires every disciple of Jesus to set this goal before himself—to love his friend. This command has two reciprocal sides, obligating the friend also to love his friend. In the original, it sounds like this: “agape one another” and “if ye have agape one to another.” The Lord Himself established this standard. Anything less is unacceptable. This decree tells me that I must become a possessor of such agape, become established in it, live by it, and allow it into every area of my life. If I see that it is absent within me, this does not excuse me. Rather, it testifies that this very quality of soul is lacking in all my knowledge and deeds. What should I do? I must acknowledge this fact before God—which is not news to Him—and ask Him for the gift of love and power to fulfill this commandment.

The person near me, in turn, must also have similar concerns and need.

When two or more manifestations of agape meet, they recognize one another and begin adjusting to each other and merging into one whole.

Love makes me perfect in many matters while preserving my individuality and freedom of choice. Agape makes me capable of loving, and God writes this commandment within my heart and mind. Agape is not feelings and emotions. Through its presence within my heart, it influences me and forms emotions and feelings in harmony with Heavenly joy, teaching me to express them correctly and appropriately. It is difficult to

imagine a loving friend with a continually gloomy expression and standard military behavior.

And so two manifestations of agape have met. What happens? They immediately recognize one another, begin testing the depth of the relationship, and seek the boundaries within which they can act. They begin exchanging blessings reciprocally and reaching toward fellowship, influencing, complementing, and supporting one another. Human language is incapable of describing this relationship correctly, but the Bible calls it love. And that is exactly what it is.

Like a magnet, my friend's agape attracts my agape, and mine attracts my friend's.

But another important factor influences the relationship between my friend and me. My agape joins me to Christ, and His agape is directed toward me. The same thing happens between us. I draw closer to Jesus, and He is drawn toward me. My friend, who possesses agape toward me, is likewise drawn by that agape toward the agape of Christ. The love of Jesus is also directed toward my friend. Together, we become a triangle of love.

In geometry and statics, the triangle is the strongest geometric structure. It is capable of withstanding enormous loads without changing its shape or the dimensions of its sides. My friend and I in Christ become the strongest unit in the church of Jesus. When a congregation is filled with similar units, they form a beautiful structure and create one united organism capable of withstanding every assault, attack, and load. It is also capable of drawing in the weak and lonely and joining them to itself.

Christ and I form a connection—a straight line of our relationship. This is a relationship, but not a structure. Christ and I, and my friend and I, are already two straight lines joined together, but they do not close into a complete figure because the connection between my friend and Christ is absent. Therefore, such a conditionally strong structure stands only until the first trial. When hurricane winds arise, it may be thrown from side to side and carried about by various winds of

doctrine, and over time it may be torn loose and carried into the unknown. The following combination also belongs to such a structure: my friend and Christ, and my friend and me. In such a situation, the entire problem lies in my relationship with Jesus. If it does not exist, my believing friend and I will not build much. This friendship will be conditional and will one day collapse into the abyss of temptations and trials from my side.

Likewise, the structure consisting of Christ and me, and Christ and my friend, has no strength, although a connection with God is implied in it. Such a structure may sway in every direction while its parts strike against one another. This causes pain and suffering within the church and family because there is no opportunity to create something shared and strong. Most likely, this is the most common kind of relationship among brothers and sisters.

If we look at the emerging picture, in which all of us are connected to Christ but not to one another, it will resemble a scarecrow with loose sticks striking one another whenever the wind blows, causing pain to themselves and to those near them. Such a picture will not resemble a strong bridge upon which trains of God's grace and abundant blessings can travel. A scarecrow exists to frighten away, while a bridge exists to connect.

A connection between my friend and me without Christ on either side is merely worldly friendship. Although it is good in itself, it gives no hope of salvation and therefore is not even worth considering here.

The connection consisting of Christ and me, Christ and my friend, and my friend and me is God's most cherished dream. He embodied it in His commandment and thereby immortalized His desire for all His disciples. He desires to see in churches and families not barricades of opinions and relationships, but bridges of love, cooperation, and understanding.

According to God's design, this same structure of love must be present in every family. Why do we see so many divorces, so much unfaithfulness, so many scandals and so much suffering

in our families? The answer is simple: the structure of agape has been damaged somewhere. Search for the cause and you will find it. Remove it with God's help, and the relationship will become strong and beautiful.

It is so wonderful to love one another. What could be a greater blessing for any community of believers who love their Savior?

Loving one another is God's monument and testimony to the world that love exists, that it is powerful, and that it is available to everyone who desires to possess it and live by it.

1. Please read 1 John 4:7-12; 1 Peter 1:22; 2:17; and Romans 12:9-10 in the light of this lesson.
2. What did you understand from this lesson?
3. Is the geometry of this lesson understandable to you?
4. Is the commandment concerning our love for one another a promise that God is ready to fulfill? If so, do you have hope that this is possible for you as well?
5. Do you desire to obey this commandment and fulfill it continually?
6. Why is it so important to love one another and God?
7. What do you plan to do next?

## Lesson 24. Who Is Jesus?

One day Jesus began an interesting conversation with His disciples. We read in Mark 8:27-29: “And by the way He asked His disciples, saying unto them, Whom do men say that I am? And they answered, John the Baptist: but some say, Elias; and others, One of the prophets. And He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Peter answereth and saith unto Him, Thou art the Christ.”

Jesus was interested in learning the disciples’ opinion of Who He was. He asks each of us the same question about Himself. At the same time, Jesus chooses a moment when we least desire to speak about anything.

However simple this question may sound to me, my answer reveals the essence of my heart. From the Bible, I know how to answer and can even repeat Peter’s words from memory as though they were my own. It is not difficult for me to describe very beautifully Who Jesus is and how dear He is to me. To some extent, this will even be true. But Jesus will ask whether I love Him and whether I know Him. He will ask these questions in such a way that He discovers and exposes my true nature. Jesus will show me how hypocritical I am.

Two very similar expressions are often encountered: to know everything about God and to know God personally.

There is a significant difference between them. We must also pay attention to a third factor: to have God within the heart and to know Him within oneself.

Let us make a comparison. Many of you know me through my publications. Some of you have seen me personally and know what I am actually like. I am very well acquainted with many of you. But not everyone can call me a friend and declare that they are likewise friends to me. Yet some of you who have never seen me can honestly say that we are friends because a close relationship has developed between us. Merely knowing facts

about a person or even knowing a person personally does not mean that we have a close relationship. Only friendly, trusting fellowship forms such a relationship.

When speaking of Christ, the same thing takes place between Him and me. I may know everything about Him, know Him personally, proclaim Him as my Savior, and even call Him my Lord and Friend. But Jesus may answer all this by saying, "I know you not," and add, "Depart from Me..." These are dreadful words that will sound like a death sentence to some. A time will come when Christ must divide this world into friends and people who are not His friends.

In the last days, the question of Who Jesus is to me and what kind of relationship I have with Him becomes the most important and vital question. It does not matter what position I hold, where I live and work, what I do for God, or what I lead. If Jesus does not know me as a Friend, I am in danger of being lost.

Even in prayer, I may call Christ anything I desire—Friend, Savior, God, or Lord. I may declare my faith and live according to it while keeping my heart closed to Him. As dreadful as this sounds, it is precisely our mutual relationship with Christ in the last days that will become the determining factor in my salvation.

I once believed that my obedience to the law and faith in Jesus were the conditions of my salvation. But the words that Love is the keeping of the law left me perplexed. I understood that I did not possess love, and I became afraid. The saddest part is that agape love belongs to those qualities of the soul that I am incapable of producing within myself. I possess something human and personal, and I even know what it is. But God's love is beyond my understanding. I simply do not possess it within myself.

But Jesus shows me the way out of what seemed to be a hopeless condition and fear. In the message to Laodicea, He describes me by calling everything by its proper name. He offers me the opportunity to buy from Him gold tried in the fire,

which is faith and love, and then directly offers me Himself, His friendship, and a close relationship. Christ does not merely offer; He stands and knocks, and His voice is heard.

How can I allow Christ to enter? There is an answer. First, if I want this at all. Second, if I desire it. Third, if I thirst for it—if I need it.

Let us give an example. I am inclined toward a relationship in which I become a friend to each of you. I speak about this honestly and directly; my heart is open to it. But I cannot build such a relationship against your will. Therefore, I simply wait for your ACTIONS, which will tell me whether you have accepted me. Everything is not so difficult. The absence of an answer is a convincing answer to me. Have you understood? Have you heard? What will you do with me?

Now is the time to act.

When Christ knocks, my heartfelt words, “Come in, Lord,” will be the most convincing evidence and hospitable invitation for Him and for all Heaven. What more must I say? I have not been given the wording of a correct answer, but my desire to have Christ within my house and heart gives Him the right to enter my life.

There is another very good invitation for Jesus: “Lord, baptize me with Your Spirit and give me Your love.” The presence of love within my heart testifies to me and to the world that Christ lives within me.

Love fills my soul with meaning and confidence in salvation. Love is Jesus within me and I within Him; it is His words within me and my obedience to Him. Without Christ, I cannot fulfill even one commandment in its spirit, and in His eyes I will be a worker of iniquity, for which He will send me away as unclean. It is written that sin is the transgression of the law. We also read in Romans 13:10: “Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.”

And so the choice is mine. Jesus has done everything to enable my decision. He has personally come to my door, where He

stands and waits for my actions. He desires friendship with me. Jesus thirsts for a close relationship, and He dreams of becoming my personal Friend. What will I do with all this?

1. Please read John 3:16; 17:3; and 1 Corinthians 12:3.
2. What did you understand from this lesson?
3. Read Isaiah 54:5. What does it have in common with the message to Laodicea?
4. What did you personally hear in this lesson? What decisions did you make?
5. Who is Jesus to you personally?
6. Why is Jesus called the Savior? From what does He save?
7. What should I do if I understand that I do not know Christ personally?

## Lesson 25. Teachers of Love

Let us consider a typical example from life.

I ask Jesus for love. He hears and answers me. I receive this Heavenly gift and rejoice that a new life is now beginning for me, with new experiences and new blessings. I anticipate how my pure love will conquer those near me and, like a magnet, draw them toward me while changing their hearts. I have heard so many songs about the influence of love and read so many books about it. And now it has become mine. I love! What happiness! My heart joyfully reaches toward the people closest to me so that in deed and in truth I may show myself to them as a genuine, loving Christian. I anticipate the joy of victory.

My home is my fortress. From now on, the people dearest to me will receive abundant blessings of God's love poured through my heart into their souls. At last they will see manifestations of this gift and better understand what it is like, because I am a living witness who loves from a pure heart.

Then everything begins to happen. I declare my new feelings to my life companion, rejoicing over the influence my words will have. In response, I receive a sarcastic smile and strange silence. I do not surrender. I assure her that from now on, once and for all, I will love and nothing will shake me. I remember the biblical promises and wait for beautiful changes in our relationship. Suddenly, an avalanche of every kind of accusation, reproach, and criticism descends upon me. I discover that I am the embodiment of evil in this world and that no worse hypocrite exists on earth. As I try to resist and defend God and His gift, I hear such details about my past mistakes that I am left speechless.

With my hands hanging down under the weight of sorrow, I drag myself to Jesus, pour out my soul to Him, and ask for protection, not understanding what is happening. He comforts me and strengthens my spirit by reminding me of passages of Scripture that inspire me again. Theory and practice are not the

same thing at all. Once more setting my heart upon love, I go to give it.

This time everything proceeds calmly. I apologize for the inconvenience I caused. We reconcile and continue with our ordinary activities. My love seeks an outlet and finally declares itself. But then something terrible happens: I am struck in the most painful and vulnerable place—someone “steps on my favorite sore spot.” Everything goes dark before my eyes. I know what to do in such a situation and how to respond to such outrageous injustice. I explode and deliver such a powerful counterattack that within seconds everything returns to normal and peace reigns in the family. Everything becomes silent. We go to separate rooms—my wife in tears, and I agitated by the experience. I calm down and desire to come to Jesus, but a heavy burden rests upon my heart. I understand that I have done something wrong. I try to pray, but the words form a lump in my throat, and I have nothing to say. Shame over what happened constricts my throat, and I feel that I have betrayed God’s trust. Deep melancholy surrounds my mind. I sink into despair. What should I do? I am lost! I am a sinner!

Then verses come to mind saying that Jesus receives sinners and loves them. Yes, this is true—but not about me, because I betrayed God. I acted not according to the spirit of love but according to the flesh. Yet when I remember other assurances of God’s love, hope for forgiveness appears. I kneel and begin to repent. At first I cannot find words, but gradually confidence in God’s acceptance fills my heart, and I receive forgiveness. Peace enters my heart, but a heavy residue of defeat remains within me in the form of painful memories of my fall. I do not know what to do with this. I go, apologize, and ask forgiveness, but in response I hear reproaches. Yet I remain silent, acknowledging my guilt.

Life continues. I turn to Jesus again and ask for greater love. Receiving it, I go on the offensive. Ahead I see the same rake lying in my path, and now I behave more cautiously. I declare my sincere feelings and believe in their genuineness and constancy, but in response I receive a verbal slap and retreat. I

plan new battle tactics and attack from another direction. It seems that I have succeeded in winning, and at last I taste the fruit of my love, rejoicing that I have conquered the impregnable fortress. I thank God in prayer and prepare to strengthen the position I have gained. The joy of victory gives me confidence, and step by step I move toward my wife's heart in order to possess it completely. At this moment, the most unexpected thing happens. I receive a "blow below the belt," and in my powerlessness I fall facedown in despair and pain. I do not understand what is happening, because I love. Everything goes dark before my eyes; the rake draws nearer and nearer, and I am ready to lose control and step upon it again. But with the last of my strength, I call upon the Name of Jesus and ask Him for love. Peace enters my heart. I see the hand of further accusations raised above me, but I no longer hide from them, preferring to remain silent. A storm of indignation crashes down upon me, and I remain silent.

Suddenly I remember how Jesus was persecuted for His goodness, how He was beaten for His love, and how those Hands that had done so much good were nailed to the cross. The picture becomes clear, and new light illuminates my mind. I suddenly understand what love means and how the world treats it. I see the manifestation of the same evil spirit toward me. No longer surprised by anything, I understand what awaits me in return for my love and repent of my naive expectations. Now my war takes a completely different course. I rebuild all my positions, destroy old stereotypes, remove my rose-colored glasses, and prepare for battle. I understand that I am no better than Jesus and that if He was persecuted, I will be persecuted as well. I read the Bible and see the assurance that from now on I have very many enemies—the whole world and spiritual wickedness in high places. But now I am not afraid because the One Who has already overcome this world lives within me. Understanding what to expect, I ask Him to give me love.

I humble myself and decide to endure every attack. I no longer rely upon myself but upon God's power. I ask Him to fill me with the Holy Spirit, and by faith I go out to war. I take the

words of love as my weapons, put on the whole armor of God, and move forward.

The storm approaches and the collision is inevitable, but I build my house upon the Rock and do not fear trials.

I love. These words no longer sound self-confident. They proceed from the depth of my relationship with Christ. They rest upon God's faithful Word. They accomplish the purpose for which they are spoken. Stones of mockery, unbelief, and accusation fly at me, and strangely enough, my most zealous enemies are the people closest to me. Yet I accept this challenge and decide to love. I empty the arsenal of my carnal memory and fill myself with love, tenderness, and compassion. My heart becomes prepared to help these poor people, and I pray for them.

I understand this truth: when I learn to love my wife perfectly, then I will be able to love everyone. How interesting and difficult all this is to understand, but this is how it is.

I look at happy families and rejoice that they have no struggle, that they are happy and live with honor and mutual respect. Why is everything different for me? Jesus asks whether I desire to learn something. I answer affirmatively. I desire it and understand that my path of learning belongs only to me. I must travel precisely this path, remaining faithful to the light sent to me and preserving the love entrusted to me.

1. Please read Matthew 10:34-36; Micah 7:5-6; and Romans 8:28 in the light of this lesson.
2. What did you understand from this lesson?
3. Are the members of your household truly your enemies?
4. Has the strategy of the enemy of the human soul been revealed to you?
5. In what way do those near us teach us love?
6. Do you hear a call to love in reproaches and criticism?
7. Do all things work together for our good?

## Lesson 26. The Variety of Trials

One of the advantages of the enemy of the human soul is that by concealing his plans from his opponent and convincing him that the enemy does not exist and that nothing terrible is happening, Satan very effectively sets his nets and quickly captures his opponent in them. He captures every careless person in them. When I do not expect the enemy and am not watchful in prayer, fellowship with Christ, or a useful activity, Satan brings his temptations crashing down upon me. He surrounds me with his agents, who pull me downward and persuade me to live according to the flesh, think about earthly things, and solve my tasks and problems in my own strength. There is nothing wrong with solving something in a human way. But there are moments and a way of life that God calls sin, and He offers His power called grace to resist evil.

There are people whom the Bible calls sinners because they live in sin and commit sin without understanding what they are doing. Genesis 6:5 says of the inhabitants of the antediluvian world: "And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." And Matthew 24:38-39 says of the inhabitants of the last days: "For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of Man be."

In comparing these accounts, I desire to emphasize the following: their thoughts and imaginations were evil, while Jesus said that they "knew not." We experience the same thing today. Most people do not think about their salvation, but desire sin and commit it diligently and continually.

Love is also action. When Jesus asked His disciples whether they also desired to leave, Peter said:

John 6:68: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of Eternal life."

Love is a verb; it is a word of action. Jesus possessed this action. He acted with faith and love. Love is God's work, which accomplishes the purpose for which it was sent. Love does not conceal its plans but acts openly and raises its banner high.

A war is taking place between the invisible forces of good and evil, between sin and righteousness, and between Christ and Satan. The battlefield lies between my right and left ears. Through the doors of my soul—my eyes and ears—these powers gain access to my heart in order to form their image within it. But I have the right to choose. I choose love, and God receives authority to form my character into His likeness, overcome sin within me, and eradicate it from my soul. Jesus gives me the mind of a victor and reveals Satan's secret designs and temptations so that I can see dangers and avoid the trap. Love makes the enemy of souls visible and his plans known. When he understands that he cannot conceal his intentions, he pours all his fury upon me through his agents, sending me problems and difficulties and surrounding me with evil people who may smile sweetly while offering sin. The enemy plunges me into illness and desires to kill me. I am discouraged and have no time to study love. My life becomes one continuous battlefield with myself and my problems. Persecution is one of Satan's most effective methods of depriving God's children of a permanent home and their familiar circle of fellowship. It descends upon me. All this is not something new and unusual, but what a loving heart that seeks God and His righteousness encounters.

Yet amid all these trials, love becomes established within the heart forever. Such difficulties are the best school for learning and applying love.

"Fear not!" the Lord says. He will not leave His children alone to fight the forces of evil. He Himself wages this war and conquers. The symbol of His absolute victory is Calvary, and the power of His victory is the shed Blood of Christ. This is the pledge of my salvation. This is my victory.

If someone thinks that when he begins learning love his life will become easy and serene, I can disappoint him, because such a person has entered the enemy's territory, which is full of surprises, and the enemy will not surrender his position without a fight. He will resist fiercely and accuse you of every sin that belongs to him. Expect trials; they will descend from every side. But readiness for such a turn of events and knowledge of the enemy's tactics give you an enormous advantage in this conflict.

Problems have always existed and always will. But those who love resolve them much more quickly and easily. Jesus Himself takes everything into His hands and carries the whole burden of my cares and sins. The sooner I give it to Him, the easier it will be for me to win victories. I ask Him for help—the Lord acts. I ask for protection—He covers me. I ask for power—He gives me His Spirit. I ask for love—He gives me Himself. What a wonderful plan for waging war!

A battle rages all around me, yet I have peace within my heart. Satan's fury crashes down upon me from every side, yet I seek those with whom I can share my love and happiness. The enemy desires to break my spirit, yet I pray and rejoice. What an unusual war. They desire to kill me, yet I thank God and sing songs to Him. Traps have been set for me, yet I put on the wings of faith and fly upward to the Heavens of God's love, in order to immerse myself in this boundless ocean and hide within it forever.

Those near me do not understand me, and my values are foreign to them. But I look upon the One Who died so that I might live and learn to love as He loves. And the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit abide with me always. Amen.

1. Please read 1 Peter 1:6-7; 4:12-14; Matthew 5:11-12; and John 15:19-21 in the light of this lesson.
2. What did you understand from this lesson?
3. Has anything similar been taking place in your life since you began studying in this School?

4. Do you understand what is now taking place in your life in response to your prayers for love?
5. How do you withstand the various trials of your love?
6. Why are trials necessary?
7. Why does the Lord not make us loving people instantly?
8. What benefit do trials of love bring?

## Lesson 27. Love Is Also Emotions and Feelings

Do you like the title of this lesson? Does it contradict what we studied shortly before? Let us examine it.

It would be completely wrong to claim that agape love is feelings and emotions. Such a position does not correspond to truth. It can be refuted very easily by understanding where love comes from and how it acts. Yet excluding feelings and emotions from the manifestations of love is also an extreme position held by people who do not understand what agape is.

The development of a Christlike character is the most important task God has placed before a human being, and character is the combination of thoughts and feelings. My thoughts form my desires and motives, while feelings give me an understanding of how right my thoughts will be when expressed in words and deeds, and what influence they will exert upon me and those around me.

My emotions give the proper coloring to everything I say and do. They adorn everything that proceeds from my heart. If emotions are removed from life, all my love will become a dry and lifeless principle that each person will understand according to the measure of the corruption of their own heart. Indifference will never adorn my love.

It is difficult to determine my true motives without hearing me and knowing me personally. Even the best deed can prove very bad if someone discovers the true motive I placed within it. And the reverse is also true.

Let us consider an example. There is a program for electronically reading books. You enter the text, press a button, and listen to a robot. It reads everything very correctly and without significant mistakes, but also without expression. I receive bare information and dry facts. The book has been heard, but I must imagine and supplement it with my own feelings and emotions. However, if the same book is read by a

professional narrator, that person can give the words such emotional coloring and express the author's feelings so clearly that I will understand many things precisely in the light of these revealed emotions and feelings.

Sometimes when reading the Bible, I place into one statement or another what I consider correct. For example, everyone may hear and understand the expression "Call unto Me..." in whatever way they desire. To one person it sounds like a commandment, to another it is a request, to someone else these words appear to be an order, to another a piece of counsel, while another person places nothing at all into this statement. In writing, it is very difficult and sometimes impossible to express the author's thought with complete precision. This is why so many interpretations arise. But when we know the author of a letter and the author's emotional condition, we can very easily see everything in the proper light.

It is written that Jesus shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied. What is satisfaction? It is an emotional expression of joy and love. Can you imagine the gloomy face of a satisfied person? It is difficult. What about the gloomy face of a satisfied Christ? I believe the prophet saw a very broad smile and a joyful gaze.

Love knows how to express itself through feelings and emotions. It is interwoven so harmoniously with these manifestations of the human soul that when love proceeds from a heart filled with it and incorporates a person's emotional capacities, it communicates that person's feelings so clearly that sometimes everything becomes understandable without many explanations. People even say that a kind word is pleasant even to a cat.

Affection, tenderness, compassion, mercy, lovingkindness, friendliness, kindness, and goodness—all these are impossible to imagine without the corresponding emotional content.

Feelings and emotions are God's gift to all creation. As I observe the animal world, I see a vivid manifestation of these qualities in many representatives of various species. Consider a

dog, for example. It is a very clear example of the harmonious combination of emotions and feelings.

If we turn our attention to the most perfect creation—a woman—we can see within her the fullness of emotional beauty and the distinctive qualities of feeling. Considering that woman was created in the image and likeness of God, we come to understand that the same qualities of soul that overflow women are not foreign to God.

Men also possess emotions and feelings, but they are much more restrained in expressing them.

Love adorns itself with the emotional qualities of the soul and gives special meaning to its manifestations when it strengthens the power of its influence through human feelings. This voice of the soul is heard. The heart responds precisely to what has been placed within love and its expression. Yet love remains a profound principle founded upon the Divine foundation of holiness and truth. It does not contradict God's statutes and laws but exists in complete harmony with them, reflecting the beauty of God's character through human expression.

Love is sufficiently restrained to express feelings and emotions vividly. It does not create the illusion of a sensation or produce emotional shocks, but confidently accomplishes what it is directed toward and desires to attain. Its final goal is the human heart. Love strives precisely toward it. It desires to possess the heart completely and through it give itself to other souls.

My feelings express my inner world, my worldview, and my assessment of various events and experiences. The absence of feelings can be compared to an illness that needs treatment.

Emotions are my assessment of what is taking place within and outside me. They are a reaction to various processes and events in my life. The absence of emotions may be called indifference.

Love knows how to express a person's feelings and emotions correctly and, through these qualities of the soul, adorn its

influence by presenting Divine principles in language understandable to a human being.

Agape love is also feelings and emotions. It knows how to present itself correctly and never remains indifferent to what is happening. A person should not neglect these qualities when expressing love toward people.

Nevertheless, we must be extremely careful not to rely upon feelings and emotions. They are a very unreliable foundation upon which relationships should not be built.

1. Please read Hebrews 5:13-14; Philippians 1:8-11; and 2:5.
2. What did you understand from this lesson?
3. Read Galatians 5:22-23 and explain which of the qualities listed there can combine beautifully with feelings and emotions.
4. Can feelings be the principal indicator of love?
5. What will love look like without the expression of feelings?
6. Is bland food with the taste of soap pleasant to eat? Can love without feelings have the same taste?
7. What will a person become without feelings and emotions?

## Lesson 28. Love Knows How to Speak

Does God communicate with His creation? Can we hear God's voice? Does God desire to tell us something? Job 12:7-9 says: "But ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee; and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee: or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee: and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee. Who knoweth not in all these that the hand of the Lord hath wrought this?"

What distinguishes us from the animal world is that we can speak and possess will, reason, and intellect. We are able to analyze, set goals, and attain them. We possess freedom of choice and can distinguish good from evil. Yet in order to attain personal ambitions, for selfish interests, or simply for pleasure, a human being is prepared to destroy both himself and others like him. Sin entered our life and became its norm. Sin has penetrated every area of human activity so thoroughly that it can no longer be distinguished from holiness. It appears that no means remains by which to be freed from it. People are born selfish, develop this quality within themselves, live in it, and die, often without ever understanding that something better exists.

But God did not leave the sinful world without hope. He offers a beautiful way of salvation from the dominion of sin and deliverance from selfishness. God gave His Beloved Son; He gave Him to our world forever. If during Old Testament times God spoke with humanity through Jesus, after Christ's birth He began speaking to the world in Jesus. And now He has decided to speak to me, within me, within my heart, through His Son.

God gives His love to the world, desiring to set it in opposition to selfishness. He waits for people to notice it and decide to acquire it. God gave humanity the Bible, in which He expressed His will very clearly, called sin by its proper name, pointed out the way and means of salvation, revealed to us the depth of His love, gave us hope, and assured us that by believing in Jesus we

can become different—new people living according to the law of love and Eternity. In confirmation of His words, God sends those who believe in Him the gift of the Holy Spirit, through Whom He has fellowship with each of us.

The Holy Spirit, abiding within my heart, reveals God's will to me, comforts me in sorrow, teaches me to distinguish sin from goodness, reveals the mysteries of a holy spiritual life, transforms my mind, and writes God's laws within it.

Under the influence of Divine Powers, I am transformed and begin to live according to the spirit of love, bearing the fruit of holiness.

Now God can speak to this world through me. By believing in Christ, I become God's instrument through which He manifests His power and proclaims His will.

God gives me His love, through which He reveals Himself and the beauty of His character to me and to the world. Love expresses itself in different ways. It knows how to speak, and it speaks many languages.

It searches for a way to every person's heart and studies how, through its manifestations, it can reach that person's mind.

When I begin speaking about love, every reasonable person desires to know whether I love that person, whether my love can touch that person's soul, and whether it can do something for it. But there is a distinctive feature: every person perceives love in their own way. Love is revealed to each person in the language closest to the heart and most understandable to that person. Sometimes a person near me may not even know that they speak their own language of love. But through interpretation and study, it is easy to determine very quickly what is closest to that person's heart.

It is also very important to know which language of love is most understandable to me and to the person near me. Otherwise, by expressing love in the way understandable to me, I may appear to the other person as a foreigner because that person perceives love differently.

There are five principal languages of love: communication, touch, gifts, spending time together, and help. Other languages may be added to this list, but all of them belong to one of these groups to one degree or another.

The Lord seeks to reach every soul at the level and in the language that the person understands and perceives.

For example, I speak much about love and try to reveal its many facets to people. I often hear—and you will also hear from people—that they need deeds, not merely words. My language of love is communication. I understand it very well and can express my thoughts and feelings in it very clearly. But to someone else I am merely a talker. When I embrace a person or touch them tenderly, if this is appropriate, I may touch that person's heart. If this is the language of love of the person near me, that person opens up. Or when I simply help someone with the ordinary affairs of life, I become the most loving person to them, provided that this person speaks precisely the language of help.

Many people love gifts, but for some this is the clearest expression of love, and they in turn express love in precisely this way. Another person needs you simply to be near, to leave everything else and devote your time to them, without even saying or doing anything. To such a person, you will be the best of all.

Another person is ready to listen and speak, and in such communication hears another person's heart and opens their own.

Our task is not to teach others our language of love but to reach people in a language they understand.

For this purpose, we are given the gift of the Holy Spirit and knowledge of the human soul, so that we can discern the distinctive qualities and perceptions of those with whom we communicate.

Unfortunately, people who do not understand the language of communication do not remain in schools like this, because to

them every field of knowledge is merely words. Therefore, we must take this fact into account and not measure others by ourselves.

In the lessons that follow, we will examine all these and other languages of love in greater detail and try to identify our own language if we do not know it.

1. In the light of our lesson, please read Mark 16:17 and 1 Corinthians 14:22.
2. What did you understand from this lesson?
3. Do you know the language of your heart?
4. Are you prepared to learn languages of love that are unfamiliar to you?
5. Did you see in this lesson new opportunities for reaching the hearts of those near you?
6. Does the prospect of learning other people's languages of love bring you joy?
7. How can you discover your own language of love?

## Lesson 29. A Prophetic School

I would like to fly an airplane as its pilot. Many times in films I have seen how beautiful it is. The cockpit has such an interesting instrument panel, so many different buttons, and such a variety of indicators and dials. And how well the colors and design have been chosen! Everything is within easy reach. Oh, what a flight we shall have! And the control yoke is just like a steering wheel in a car. I can already imagine us, my friends, taking our seats in the airplane. I ask you to fasten your seat belts, start the engine, and we take off. I fly low over your homes, and from a bird's-eye view you look upon your homeland, admiring familiar scenery from an unusual perspective. Then we stop for a picnic and fly on. I press the buttons on the instrument panel, take hold of the leather-covered control yoke, turn on pleasant music for you, and the flight proceeds in complete comfort and coziness.

Which of you is ready to take such a journey with me?

I can already picture a forest of raised hands, and I decide to choose the largest airplane for this purpose, hoping to receive it as a gift.

Please remember this illustration. It may prove very useful.)))

There are things we are accustomed to taking for granted. We do not even stop to consider why they are one way rather than another. But if we think carefully, we can always find the original cause and, through analysis, determine that experience gained from mistakes and tragedies lies at the foundation of every rule or law.

There is such a concept as authorization to operate equipment or perform work. By law, incompetent people have no right to do what they have not been trained or taught to do; without authorization, they cannot engage in whatever activity they desire. It is logical that if I am a builder by profession, I will not be permitted to treat people medically.

Yet when I come to God, for some reason I decide that I understand everything perfectly; and if something is unclear to me, I think I can resolve it all quickly through fasting and prayer. However, the spiritual world also has its own rules and laws, as well as particular rights and authorizations that are strictly observed by the opposing sides.

And knowledge of these laws places responsibility upon those who carry them out.

In our school we study the science of Agape Love. I think that to an unfamiliar ear it may sound rather strange and frivolous, but as one enters into the essence of the instruction, one begins to discover a new world, new laws, and new relationships that one had never even considered. And this is only the beginning of our education. What, then, will come next?

To understand what is taking place in our school, I would like to draw your attention to the parable of the ten virgins and the message to Laodicea. They are remarkably consonant in many respects. Both accounts assure us that we must possess something within ourselves that cannot be obtained automatically, merely by keeping company with others, or simply taken for granted. We must make an effort of our own and buy from God something He cannot give me without a price. Perhaps, as I enter this path of Heavenly commerce, at first I do not understand the essence of these things and proceed only by faith that this is right and necessary. But when I begin receiving the oil and gold promised by God, I see within myself the advantage of such merchandise. In both cases we are told that it can be bought. This means that the appointed price must be paid. That price may be my time and my sins. These are what God most desires to receive from me in exchange for His love and faith. When I acquire these qualities of soul, I cannot transfer them to others, but they become my eternal possession, belonging to me by full right.

It is also interesting that God does not simply sell this to me without further purpose. He desires to teach me so that I may understand what it is and how to use it.

If I see an automobile and understand how useful it is for accomplishing my tasks, I go and buy it. But that does not give me the right to drive it. I must complete a course of instruction and pass an examination, after which I may drive a car for the rest of my life, acquiring my own experience and driving skills. Such is the norm of life. Violating this order brings a fine; a repeated violation brings confiscation of the vehicle; and afterward, if I continue breaking the law, imprisonment follows.

But in the spiritual realm, for some reason I desire to receive a free airplane and even carry passengers in it, although I have neither the money, the license, nor the knowledge to do so. And this is considered normal in the life of a believer. Yet it turns out that here, too, there are rules, authorizations, and processes of instruction.

There is spiritual food that can be consumed only in liquid form; there is food that must be chewed; and there is food that must be gnawed with the teeth. The manna from Heaven had to be gathered early in the morning outside the camp. Every field of knowledge has its own spiritual bread.

And the science of love has not been abolished. It exists, and it must be studied. To those who do so, God will deliver the desired purchase and grant the right to use this treasure eternally.

I did not invent this. I saw this principle in the Bible, discovered it for myself, learned it, and now share it with you.

Especially in the last days, God places particular emphasis upon our possessing love and having the right to use it. We must recognize this and choose this gift of our own free will.

All this was foretold long before our time. We either accept love and live by it, or reject it and invent something of our own. But the first choice is better.

The School of Agape Love is our life in Christ and Christ's life in us; it is the fulfillment of God's prophecies in our lives. Therefore, I ask you to rejoice that we have become participants in these events. At present we walk by faith that

this is so, without knowing what will be at the end. But the experience we gain will bring—and is already bringing—good fruit.

God's Name will be written in our minds, love will become ours by right, and we shall be able to pay with it in all our dealings with others. A bold statement? But I believe it. And the foundation of this faith is Jesus Living in the heart. It is He Who, through the Holy Spirit, reveals the invisible and shows us great and inaccessible things.

There will always be people who express unbelief or ignorance through their opinions, finding hooks upon which to hang their doubts. But such people are given this counsel: take heed unto yourselves and unto Holy Scripture. If the fruit of the Holy Spirit is present in your life, you are on the right path; if it is absent, you must find it and make it your own.

The hidden treasure in the field represents mineral riches concealed beneath the ground. They may be discovered by accident, or they may be sought with confidence and, once found, extracted and used to enrich oneself and others. The surface does not always reveal what lies in the depths. But a shovel and diligent labor help us make many unexpected discoveries in life. And this is from the Lord.

Will I sell everything in order to buy the field with the vein of gold I unexpectedly found in the message to Laodicea? Or will I bury this treasure beneath a heap of information and wait for gifts from the Lord? The decision is mine.

I decide to buy. I gather everything I have and go to the Faithful Witness, Who counsels me to purchase something.

We draw up the contract of sale. Afterward I go to school to obtain the knowledge and authorization required to use my purchase.

I think that when I have learned and passed the examination, I will also be entrusted with carrying passengers.

1. Please read Matthew 25:9; Revelation 3:18; and Matthew 13:44.

2. What did you understand from this lesson?
3. Why does God sell Heavenly treasures?
4. What do you think may be given as payment for the Heavenly purchases described in Revelation 3:18?
5. What do you understand by the symbols in Revelation 3:18?
6. It is written in 2 Corinthians 4:7: "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us." Why does Paul think so?
7. Do you think this School is prophetic?

## Lesson 30. Touch—A Language of Love

Imagine the following scene. Christ comes upon the clouds of Heaven and raises the righteous dead. The living righteous are transformed. God's power draws all these people upward. And in a certain place all the righteous meet together. What a glorious scene! Being one with Christ, I have confidence in salvation and picture myself in this very group of people. And, of course, I will be deeply interested in seeing my Savior face to face. Our eyes will meet. In an instant I will understand the answers to many questions that had been mysteries to me. Then I will hear the joyful cries of my friends, my brothers and sisters, with whom we worked out our salvation together. What will that meeting be like? I think we will embrace one another very tightly and cry out for joy as we praise God. Our rejoicing will know no bounds. Then we will begin searching for our loved ones who are not beside us. And when we cannot embrace them, we will understand that they are lost forever, and our grief will know no bounds. I think that Jesus and all the good angels will weep with us. Joy and sorrow will merge in a single cry as everything is brought to its conclusion. But sorrow will pass away, for God will wipe away every tear. Eternal joy will be with us, and our eyes will rest upon Jesus. We will become one united family and remain so throughout Eternity.

When I meet Christ personally, I dream of seeing His love and His approval and of finding myself in His embrace. I long so much to draw close to Him and simply remain silent, remembering all my experiences and the victories gained through His power. I am very interested to know what He will say to me personally in those moments. I think they will be the most beautiful words I have ever heard. Then I will release my embrace, and we will look into one another's eyes. At that moment I will understand everything that was hidden from me in this earthly life.

I will feel ashamed of my doubts and unbelief. Thoughts of missed opportunities and unfinished projects for the salvation

of those near me will trouble me. I will feel pain over my own failures, but in the eyes of Jesus I will see no condemnation. He will quietly say, "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." And I will enter and remain in it forever.

Touch is something we begin receiving from our mothers from the moment of birth. It is the clearest expression of God's love through physical contact with the body of someone dear to us. Even the animal world uses this language to express its agape.

There is a power in touch that is unknown to us, a power that tells our mind and heart that we are needed, that we are loved, and that a friend is near. For some people this language of love becomes so intimate that only through it can they feel with all their heart the full depth of another person's love. In an inexplicable way, the soul responds to every touch and instantly distinguishes what it contains. If the touch causes pain, that pain tells your consciousness far more loudly than it speaks to people whose languages of love are different that you have been deeply hurt. If it is a touch of love and friendship, the heart trembles, receives it as the most precious gift, and opens itself to admit the person fully into its life. The heart begins to believe that a friend is near who will not betray it. It now waits expectantly for the next expression of love.

Yet the world is cruel to such people. The enemy of souls also speaks this language, inflicting immeasurable pain upon the soul, after which it closes itself and searches for another language of love but does not find one. The dismissive expression "calf-like tenderness" has confidently entered everyday speech and discourages many people whose language of love is touch.

The culture of many peoples does not permit friends to touch one another, depriving them of the opportunity to express their love in this way. Even within families, the influence of such a mentality can make its own adjustments and, through the absence of touch, deprive family members of many of life's joys.

I remember a story told by a preacher who was speaking before unbelieving young people and persuading them of God's love.

Suddenly one of the listeners—a young man who looked like a punk—walked confidently toward the preacher. The entire hall froze in anticipation. What was about to happen? The young man approached the pastor and quietly asked, “Could you please hug me?” The preacher embraced him, and the young man began to weep bitterly, saying that he had not received such an embrace for a very long time.

Behind the imposing outward appearance of every person beats a heart that longs to hear words of love in its native language—the language closest to the soul.

Strictness, proper subordination, deference, and respect are all good in their proper place, but these qualities often erect insurmountable barriers to the heart. It is impossible to go around them.

Once, in 2010, when I attended a camp meeting in Novi Obikhody, Ukraine, I decided to greet with an embrace every brother I met each morning. It was difficult for me to make this decision, but I wanted to discover what would happen if I behaved this way. I did not know anyone, yet I overcame this barrier and took a step toward them. I noticed that many of the brothers received my embrace joyfully and, on the following day, were already waiting for me so that they could greet me in the same way. Some did not refuse out of politeness but showed no initiative of their own. I greatly enjoyed this manner of relating to one another and decided to practice it at every similar gathering. Some of the sisters looked at us with benevolent envy and rejoiced that we loved one another so much.

One brother told me that I was the first and only person in the world who had ever embraced him.

Later I noticed that many sisters, at important meetings and partings, also do not object to allowing themselves to embrace someone. Yet the culture of relationships and Christian ethics place obstacles here—obstacles that some nevertheless manage to overcome.

No one has abolished the language of love expressed through touch. Nor is it possible to do so. If it is written in the heart, a person will subconsciously wait throughout life for someone who knows how to speak it. To that person, all words and deeds, gifts and time are not as important as the tender touch of a friend. It is the clearest expression of the language of love, but it must remain under the control of reason and will so that the enemy of souls cannot use it to harm a person. How many deceived and disappointed souls have been used for pleasure and then cast aside like an unwanted thing! The heart closed itself. But it did not die; it waits for someone who knows how to express pure, eternal agape in this understandable language.

When I visited our churches in Belgium, I was warned that this country has a custom of kissing when people meet. It was difficult for me to accept, and I tried not to let anyone come closer than the length of my outstretched hand. Yet some still managed to kiss me. To me this seemed strange and unacceptable, but as I observed my fellow believers, I saw purity and holiness in this manner of relating and began to view it differently. If I had remained in that country, I think I would have begun doing the same.

A person whose language of love is touch waits for such an expression of attention and rejoices upon receiving it. We must take this into account when communicating with people. By their reaction they themselves will let you know what they like and what they do not.

Many people speak this language, regardless of faith, age, sex, or nationality.

1. In the light of this lesson, please read Mark 10:13; Luke 5:13; 15:20; and Daniel 8:18; 10:18.
2. What do these verses have in common?
3. What did you understand from this lesson?
4. Whom do you see yourself as in the account of Luke 7:38-39?
5. Do you like the language of touch, and do you know how to communicate in it?

6. What do you experience when your friend touches you with love?
7. Will you embrace your friends on the glorious morning of the Resurrection?

## Lesson 31. Gifts—A Language of Love

What we see around us, what we breathe, and what we are made of—all this is God's gift to us. We have been given life, reason, will, and intellect. We have been granted freedom of choice along our path through life.

But the most beautiful Gift that God the Father has given us for all ages is His Beloved Son Jesus, Who chose to become our Savior from the power of sin and death. What are we to do with this Gift? Because of Jesus, our sinful world still exists. We have been given 6,000 years of earthly life so that during this period every person may make a decision by accepting or rejecting God's way of salvation and healing.

And ahead of us awaits the most wonderful gift, which all people long to possess but which only the chosen will receive: Eternity; the Eternal God—the Father and the Son—in all Their fullness and Glory, Whom we will be able to see face to face while living forever; the fullness of the Holy Spirit; and the incorruptible joy of a holy, unending life. Eternal dwellings have been prepared for us as a gift in response to our choice of life with Jesus, and throughout endless ages Christ Himself will be our Husband, and we will be His bride.

All this invisible reality is now grasped by faith, but it will soon become visible reality. We all await these gifts and joyfully receive them even now, believing that they exist and that they are rightfully ours. We have earned none of the things listed above, but we know that all of them belong to us through our right of faith in Jesus Christ, because of the love of God, Who loves to give gifts.

Gifts are things for which we do not have to labor and which we do not need to earn. Often a gift is something unexpected and pleasant, long-awaited and wonderful in our life. Through a gift we can express our attitude toward a person, show how dear that person is to us, and demonstrate that we remember them.

But people are different, and gifts are different as well.

For many people, gifts are a language of love. Someone may perceive these words as expressing a consumer mentality, but a person who has this gift and speaks this language will always receive and appreciate another person's attention. Such a person will see in it the highest expression of love and care. A gift can be a little key to a person's heart. If I speak other languages of love, the language of gifts will seem strange and foreign to me. Yet it is worth learning, because people sometimes not only expect a gift from you but may also give one to you. When they give you something with all their heart, they will desire to place within that gift all their love and their longing to make your life more beautiful and better. And how will you receive it? Through indifference and failure to understand this language of love, you can break the heart of someone who dared to open it to you in their native language. But you can also win that heart if you know that it understands the language of gifts and loves to speak it. This becomes possible when you yourself know this language.

A gift does not necessarily have to be something purchased in a store. It may be a large or small token of attention, something made by hand, or something gathered in a field or garden. Money may also be given when someone is in need of it. Everything depends upon the place and circumstances. And people, too, are different.

For souls spoiled by abundance, who through excess have lost their sensitivity to this language of love, agape can put its whole self into preparing special gifts.

A soul cannot be bought with gifts; it needs the Bread of Life. It languishes in the prison of its sins and waits for someone to visit it and give it something genuine, true, and precious.

A person who speaks the language of gifts will very quickly understand how well I know this language. There are two forms of communication: receiving and giving. They always go together. One may give nothing, and everything may still be fine; but one may refuse to accept a gift or express indifference

toward it and thereby grieve a friend who desired in this way to reveal all their love. Sometimes it is very difficult for us to accept something from others because of modesty, because we do not wish to deprive a friend, or because we do not want to be indebted. But here we need wisdom from above.

And gifts should not be confused with bribes. God condemns those who wait for or ask for bribes, as well as those who desire to give them. Today it is very easy to purchase another person's conscience, and this opens many possibilities. A bribe often solves various problems quickly and efficiently. Laws are frequently written in ways that provoke people to take such actions by creating opportunities for them. But the Bible does not approve of this approach to solving problems.

God tests hearts and teaches them purity in relationships and holiness of motives.

Does God love gifts? What can I give Him? Can the One Who is Love and Who gives Himself receive something from me as well? I think His great heart responds very tenderly to everything I do for Him or for the sake of Jesus, and He watches very attentively to see what motive I place into a particular deed or gift. What I have received from His hand I return to Him. God awaits my love and understands it perfectly and without error in every language, in all its manifestations and expressions. And He Himself gives me everything I need, even when I am ungrateful and evil. That is Who He is. Love knows how to give gifts.

The same law of gifts operates among people according to the principle of reciprocity.

A heart that speaks the language of gifts waits for someone who can communicate with it in its native language, and it is ready to do everything for a person who speaks understandable words of love.

For many foreigners, this language of love may be the most difficult language of all. For the principle, "Oh, how willingly we give away what we ourselves do not need," is recognized very quickly and is not accepted as an expression of love.

Have you ever tried, in a good sense and within Biblical boundaries, to give yourself as a gift? I have. But those to whom I gave myself proved to be foreigners: I was not accepted, and my gift was not wanted.

Gifts are not my native language of love, but I am learning to speak it. This helps me win friends who no longer believe that anyone will hear and understand them. In the anguish of loneliness, they give themselves something and rejoice in these small tokens of attention, modestly dreaming of meeting someone who will understand and notice them.

Love studies difficult languages and can express itself in any of them without difficulty.

And once a foreign language has been learned, you begin to see the beauty of this communication from within and discover the amazing world of an unknown country in which you were born and raised, but which you may later have left because you preferred other languages and other forms of communication.

Love brings to mind everything forgotten in childhood and teaches us to love in a language of love understandable to the human heart.

1. Please read John 3:16; Romans 6:23; and 1 John 5:11.
2. What kinds of gifts are described in Proverbs 17:8; 18:16; and 21:14? Should this be practiced?
3. How can you express your love to a person who speaks the language of gifts?
4. What can you give a friend when you have no money?
5. Do you like receiving gifts from poor people who live in need and do not have sufficient means?
6. What did you understand from this lesson?
7. Can every gift be an expression of your love?

## Lesson 32. Revelations of Love

Together with our world, God created all the discoveries and laws that exist today. Every modern achievement and technology was known to the Creator from the beginning, and He provided that at the end of earthly history we would draw upon an abundance and variety of new knowledge so that people might use it for their benefit and development. Not everything discovered by humanity brings benefit, and not everything is used by us for its intended purpose.

And how many discoveries are classified as secret and directed toward killing, infecting, and destroying! We will never know about them, but they exist. The enemy of souls uses every method to make all the benefits of civilization harm humanity. But God seeks to turn everything to good. Two paths are set before us, and the choice remains ours.

There is, however, one interesting quality in discoveries. What I study has always existed, but it becomes mine when I discover it and decide to use it for myself.

Consider radio, for example. Radio waves have existed ever since creation. But someone decided to study the invisible world of radio waves and discovered that it has its own laws and relationships. This achievement made it possible to transmit information very quickly over great distances without wires. Of course, the pioneers could not see the future and knew nothing of cellular communication or the internet, but step by step they followed the path of new discoveries and rejoiced in the possibilities made available through advances in the study of these laws. In the end, it became apparent that our world is one great radio receiver capable of receiving and transmitting information. Combined with discoveries in electrification, bioengineering, microbiology, and other fields, our planet appears as one whole organism living harmoniously according to all these laws, which interact with one another in every sphere.

The School of Agape Love helps us touch the eternal laws that have existed from the very foundation of the Universe. To us they are still entirely new and barely perceptible, but as we study and comprehend them, we discover an invisible and beautiful world that we had never imagined before and whose existence we had not suspected. This world of love has always existed and will stand throughout Eternity. God created it as the foundation of the Universe, but it is revealed only to those who investigate and seek it. This world is so amazing, so simple and at the same time so complex, that few people dare to enter its territory and, having entered, to continue onward. It inspires awe through its might and power, its beauty and diversity. The world of love is so fascinating that when I immerse myself in it, I can forget everything else. This world interacts with all humanity in an attempt to preserve it from self-destruction and catastrophe. Yet humanity chooses another path—the path of sin and death. God, however, desires to rescue people from this fatal self-deception by offering them something better.

Agape Love exists. It will always exist. It does not hide from people. It is available to everyone who begins to study, seek, and desire it. It is not difficult to receive, for it was created for you and me, for human happiness. Agape Love was confirmed by the blood of Christ and is given by Him to everyone who is born again unto Eternal life.

As I study the laws of love and the principles of interaction with those near me, I make new discoveries and tune my “radio receiver” to God’s frequency, upon which the Lord transmits to me new revelations about Himself, clothing them in simple words, thoughts, and feelings accessible to my perception. He draws the image of love in my consciousness and dissolves it into every cell of my awareness and thinking, making it part of me. God has hidden Himself within love, and in this simple way, within the bounds of my freedom, He enters my being.

He reveals to me new, great, and inaccessible things that I do not know, and He makes them part of my life. At the beginning I cannot imagine what will come afterward, but by faith I

comprehend great things and plunge into the depths of new revelations that roll over me like ocean waves.

In the light of love, the entire Bible becomes a living Book written about agape. And I understand that love is both mercy and justice in one Person and in absolute harmony. I cannot separate one from the other.

God is great in His mercy toward the sinner and terrible in His justice toward sin. This combination both fascinates and frightens me. But God calms me and assures me that while I am learning His love, He will tenderly care for me and correct all my mistakes at His own expense. And I continue learning.

I have learned to give my cares to God, and He Himself carries this burden. But when I decide that I have achieved something, have become great, and begin to grow proud, He places my entire burden back upon me, and I simply howl from weakness beneath the weight of my cares. I ask Him to deliver me, humble myself, repent, and receive freedom.

Revelations of love are given to me by God in response to my seeking and investigation. It is impossible to study these eternal laws, learning their power and constancy, and yet remain outside the sphere of their influence. They enter my life and transform it. Love is like a radioactive field: while in its presence, you receive a certain dose of radiation, and it remains within you forever. The nearer you come to the source of radiation, the stronger the exposure. Then I myself become someone through whom this radiation, by invisible threads, can influence perception and transmit its influence to others. Just as it is impossible to become radioactive without a source of radiation, so it is impossible to learn to love without believing in God and having a relationship with Him.

Like the pioneers of radio, we do not know what the future worldwide web of love will look like, but it is certain that it exists within God's purposes. We simply need to continue onward from victory to victory, from revelation to revelation, overcoming difficulties and resistance without fearing storms and trials.

The One Who is Love is with us.

When a family is formed, we see the union of two different beings who have decided to become one. But time is needed to learn about one another, reveal themselves to one another, love, study, know, and test one another. The same law operates in the science of love. Love is not revealed in a single day, but gradually enters life through small daily revelations and becomes part of me. I come to know God, fall in love with Him, discover His Power and beauty, prove Him, and begin by entrusting Him with small things, then great things, and finally myself. I believe Him, learn to communicate with Him, and become so accustomed to this that I recognize His voice everywhere. I see His image in those near me who walk with Him. I feel His power and influence in every trial. From all this, my life with Jesus is gradually formed, and the love of God becomes mine. I love not because love was accidentally given to me somewhere as an inheritance from a wealthy relative, but because God Himself taught me in His School of Agape Love.

And this school is located between my right ear and my left, at the very center of the great controversy between good and evil. I decide which side will prevail. Christ has won the victory in this war, and if I am united with Him, His victory becomes mine.

Love is all around me. It is always present, and at some point I simply need to take it and discover it for myself—which is what I am doing.

1. In the light of our lesson, please read Proverbs 4:18; 8:22-31; Jeremiah 31:3; Deuteronomy 29:29; and 1 Peter 1:22.
2. What did you personally understand from this lesson?
3. Does it trouble you that God does not reveal the fullness of His love to you all at once?
4. In the light of our lesson, read Hosea 4:6. What do you picture when you read this verse?
5. Will the Lord reveal the foundations and mysteries of His love to those who begin praying about it?
6. Do you believe that love has always been available to everyone?

7. Is it worth beginning, at some point, to pray for agape love?

## Lesson 33. Time—A Language of Love

The most precious thing we possess—something given to all of us in equal measure, yet which we sometimes neglect—is our time. Every morning people receive an entire day of time, which they may use at their own discretion.

Time was given to humanity after our first parents violated God's prohibition. Sin entered the world, and together with it came time, which began counting down the span of human life.

Our life consists of the time we spend living it. When the breath of life leaves us, our time stops with it. A person dies.

Everything that person managed to do during the allotted span of time is called a life. All a person's deeds are written in special Heavenly books of deeds, on the basis of which that person will be judged. The books are closed so that they may later be opened at the final, dreadful judgment. And everyone will receive according to what they deserve—that is, according to the deeds they performed.

There is another Book in Heaven—the Book of Life—in which are written the names of those who accepted the conditions of their salvation, believed in Jesus, and spent their lives loving God and people. These souls are declared alive and do not come into judgment, but have passed from death unto life.

Revelation 20:12 says: “And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another Book was opened, which is the Book of Life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works.”

Time is the language of love of those who value it in a special way—those who understand that when they give someone their time, they give that person themselves. Such people consider this gift the most important of all. In their eyes, every other language of love becomes less significant in comparison with the language of time. If I decide to devote my time to a person

near me who speaks this language, that person does not need many words or gifts in order to open their heart. For that soul, time spent together will be the finest gift expressing my love.

A study was conducted among a group of people. It was observed that when an appeal was made to collect funds for material assistance to those in need, these people willingly donated small sums. But when an appeal was made to give the needy their time instead of material support—to visit them and simply talk with them—it became clear that the people were prepared to give much more money and work harder to earn those funds, if only they would not have to go anywhere or visit anyone.

The expression “I have no time” has become the motto of many people. And indeed, there is no time for those whom you do not need or find interesting.

Now, while the whole world is in quarantine, everyone has time, but it is very difficult to give it to those toward whom you are indifferent.

When time is the language of love of one member of a family, that person’s expectations amount to a desire that others speak with them in precisely this language. Such a person is ready even to communicate in silence, treasuring every moment spent together. The more time you give people like this, the happier their lives become.

Time is money. This is how our world lives, having decided to reduce human life to material values. And there is a measure of bitter truth in these words. But when a person goes to the grave, few remember how much time that person spent at work. What comes to mind are pleasant memories of those moments in life when that person was near—what we did, discussed, and planned together, and how much time we spent with one another. How precious these memories are to those who speak the language of time! At such moments you understand that money is not everything. Love cannot be bought. The whole world is not worth even one hour spent with someone you love.

Love teaches the language of time and shows how and with whom it is best to communicate in it. But the time I give a person does not necessarily have to involve my physical presence. It may be given through my good deeds, through providing help, through writing letters, or through a telephone conversation. Every minute of life devoted to such a friend is experienced by that person as a moment spent with you personally, because during that time they thought about you, communicated with you, read your letters, and looked upon your deeds.

God also loves to communicate in the language of time, and He is ready to give Himself to every person for as long as He is needed. By my attitude toward God, I show how dear He is to me.

Time is what I can use to pay Jesus for the treasures He offers me to purchase in His message to Laodicea. The more time I give, the more I will be able to possess. The gifts of Heaven are given to me without measure, but by investing my life in them, I make them part of myself. And God establishes me in this.

Time will never end. The moment will never come when I can say, "That is all, Lord. I have paid the full price for Thy love and righteousness; now I can attend to my own affairs." That will never happen. Love is continually given to me in exchange for my time and my sins. My life is spent either in lawlessness or in love. Acquiring Heavenly gold means choosing the direction of my life, throughout which I continue paying Jesus for His merchandise and have the full right to use it. And to receive eternal Love, eternal life is necessary; otherwise, an equal exchange cannot take place. In that case, Heaven may refuse me.

My fellowship with you, friends, and your fellowship with me costs time, and it may take place either in the spirit of love or merely from duty. In the first case, the Lord makes this time golden and blesses it. Any other motives grieve Him. Yet we are in a school where God desires to teach us to value our time, understand its importance, and manage it properly. When I buy gold tried in the fire, I understand how much it costs and the

true value of such a purchase. In essence, I take the offered merchandise on a lifelong lease at the highest price I can pay. And I simply have no time left for anything else.

God's language of time is one of the most visible tests for me. I will have no excuse if I devote this time not to Him but to the works of the flesh. Yet I can take God into everything I do and everything by which I live. He is with me in every kind of work, and love is my motivating purpose in every undertaking. I love—this means that all my time belongs to Jesus, and He directs it. This is a very difficult language of love, but it is worth learning.

1. In the light of this lesson, please read Luke 21:36; John 6:3; Matthew 9:10; and Acts 14:28.
2. What did you understand from this lesson?
3. How much time does Jesus spend saving people from the power of sin?
4. What can be done for a friend whose language of love is time? How can you express your love?
5. Do you enjoy communicating with God in this language of love? If so, how do you do it?
6. Is it worth learning this language of love if you understand another language better?
7. How can you tell that a friend's language of love is time?

## Lesson 34. Love Is Mercy and Justice

One of the most important qualities of love is that it is the union of mercy and justice. For many people, this combination is a discovery. If I understand this question differently, I create my own image of love in my mind, attempting to fit it within the limits of my personal conception. I then expect this gift to manifest itself in me and in other people only in the ways I consider right.

As a result, I encounter actions that appear contradictory to me, and I do not always understand how to conduct myself properly from the standpoint of love when the need arises to act in a particular way.

Once, at a camp meeting, I was walking after lunch when I saw one of the brothers holding a mouse by its tail and striking it against the pavement. I was surprised and asked why he was doing this. He replied that someone had run over the mouse, and it lay half alive and suffering beside the road. Out of compassion, the brother decided to hasten its death, and that is what he did. I began to think.

I very often hear our kind and loving God accused of cruelty and violence that He permitted during Old Testament times. And regarding our own time, the question is frequently asked: "If there is a god, why has he allowed so much evil? Why do children become sick and die of hunger?" Moreover, they speak of god with a lowercase letter. One must answer such people and vindicate the true God.

The truth is that God loves all the people He created. He desires the death of no one, but wants everyone to be saved and inherit Eternity.

Another important truth about God is that He alone is the Giver of Life, and from His hand life passes to every creature and every person. God may give life and take it away at His own discretion, without consulting anyone or giving anyone an

account of His actions. He is God the Creator, and the whole Earth belongs by right to Him alone. Every question about His prerogative to act in one way or another has a single answer in Genesis 1:1: “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.”

And yet, possessing absolute power and authority in the Universe, our Heavenly Father condescends so far as to allow His creation to judge Him. God gives an account of all His actions. By examining the deeds of the Eternal God, we can see the harmonious union of mercy and justice.

God is Love. This is what is written, and this is how it truly is.

If love is made merciful only and given authority solely in that sphere, very serious problems will arise that cannot be resolved through mercy. Evil will engulf your entire world, and you will understand that a law is needed to place limits upon the influence of sin—a law whose violation requires justice to come into force and establish order. I believe the presence of law and police in any nation creates normal conditions for the life and safety of its citizens and their property.

If, however, only justice is taken into account and the violation of laws and rules is considered from that position, prison and death await all of us, without any possibility of mercy or leniency. Justice demands exact obedience to the law, grants no indulgence to offenders, and scrutinizes every detail, acting only according to the letter of the law and desiring to be absolutely just and impartial. And if we take into account the fact that God knows everything about me—even what I do not know about myself—I will have no chance of salvation when I meet His justice.

Now let us combine these two concepts. Then we receive that very Agape Love which possesses mercy sanctified by a just attitude and which acts justly on the basis of mercy.

There is a wise saying in Ecclesiastes 8:11: “Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.”

It is love that gives a person the freedom to make a choice and reap the fruit of what has been sown.

But what do I do with this freedom? What does the world do with it?

We see what is happening around us. Sin boldly raises its repulsive head, and people infected with the spirit of rebellion against God are not afraid to do evil. Whereas evil was once local, it has now become a pandemic spreading equally throughout the world, destroying everything good around it and uprooting truth from people's minds.

What, then, is a loving God to do? Once He cleansed the Earth with the waters of the Flood, acting justly toward evil. But He promised there would never again be a flood. What, then, will there be? There will be the Second Coming of Christ, at which sin will come to an end and every person will receive exactly what they chose and desired to receive. Those who believe in Jesus will obtain the right to Eternal life, while the wicked will obtain the right to death. Everyone will reap what they sowed and receive what they chose. "Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other."

When a sinner meets the Righteous God face to face, that person will understand how much mercy was shown, with what longsuffering and love for humanity God treated them, and with what great compassion their many sins were forgiven—yet all was rejected with contempt and indifference. Then the person will see and learn what justice means and how it acts. No one will then say to God, "What doest Thou?" and no one will question His authority to punish and take away life.

When love finds a place in my heart, it teaches me to love the sinner and treat every person mercifully, showing leniency and understanding. At the same time, however, love hates sin and does not justify its presence in my life or in the conduct of other people. Love does not surrender its position but resists the corrupting influence of sin.

Not everyone understands this union, and therefore people expect a loving person to direct toward them only modest

smiles, self-sacrifice, and good deeds. All these things should indeed be present, but we must also remember that love is not spinelessness. It is steadfast obedience to God's law, within whose bounds love is free to act at its own discretion.

This is what love is, and this is what it will remain.

Mercy and justice are two sisters in my heart. They always give me wise counsel so that I may act rightly. They desire that I always give them authority to act according to the circumstances.

And what things one hears said against one's love! But more about that later.

1. In the light of this lesson, please read Colossians 3:14; Exodus 34:6-7; and Revelation 3:19.
2. Explain what you understood from this lesson. What new truth was revealed to you?
3. How do you picture love combined with these qualities in practical life?
4. How can love act toward my sins and toward the sins of those near me?
5. What would happen if God were only just?
6. What would happen if God were only merciful?
7. Why must love contain both qualities?

## Lesson 35. Time Is a Language of God's Love

At the creation of our world, the Lord decided to set apart a special time for His creation. He Himself gave an example of what to do and how to keep this time holy.

We read in Genesis 2:2-3: "And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had made; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it He had rested from all His work which God created and made."

Seven is the number of God's fullness, a number symbolizing completion, harmony, and the authority of God.

When we speak of the human division of time, it can always be connected with something. A day is one rotation of the Earth upon its axis. A month is the renewal of the Moon's illumination and its orbit around the Earth. But since this phase lasts from 27.2 to 29.6 days, for convenience these days have been adjusted to the completeness of the year. A year is one revolution of the Earth around the Sun.

But with what can we connect the week? No cycle in the world corresponds to this span of time. Only the event described in the first two chapters of the Bible points to it.

It is highly significant that the seventh day was given by the Creator to humanity, and not the other way around. This enables us to understand that God made this time special for human beings.

In my opinion, at the very beginning of earthly history the Lord came to meet with people on this very day. Adam and his wife knew this appointed time. After the Fall, they became afraid of God and hid, but the Creator found them.

When God came to this meeting, He pronounced sentence upon the sinners for violating His prohibition. Adam and Eve were expelled from Paradise, where they had formerly met with their

Creator. Yet they were not separated from one another, and the order of time was not changed.

The family and the Sabbath were carried by humanity from holy life as memorials of that beautiful time when people could meet personally with God. These two gifts were given to humanity and have come down to our own day. In the last days, the enemy of the human soul directs his fiercest attacks precisely against these signs of God's authority.

To perpetuate the holiness of the seventh day of the week, God placed it in the very center of His law and, together with His other commands, gave it to humanity as a commandment binding upon all people.

The Sabbath is a constant reminder to humanity of Who is the true Owner of the Earth and the Lawgiver. It is also a special portion of time during which God Himself commanded both people and working animals to do nothing, but to rest. The Lord also set this time apart for Himself, ordaining that every intelligent creature should keep the Sabbath holy unto God and worship Him on this day, showing the whole world that people honor God as the Creator and Lord of their lives.

God also comes to people on this day to have special fellowship with them, to bless His obedient children, and to give them new strength for the working week.

Some regard the Sabbath only as a prohibition against work, but it has a deeper meaning for the soul.

It is also interesting that this commandment cannot be fulfilled merely according to the letter of the law. Obedience must include a spiritual understanding of Who God is to me and what He does in my life.

Simply stopping on the Sabbath is good even for a working animal, but we are not mindless cattle called to labor for a portion of food. We human beings possess reason and will and can choose and evaluate what we have chosen.

All the commandments were given to humanity out of love, and they define the proper relationship of a person to God and of

one person to another. The fourth Commandment points to the Lawgiver as the Creator of everything that exists, including you and me.

Love obeys God in all His commandments. These laws are written by the Creator Himself in the heart and mind of the person who believes, who loves, and who desires to live forever. My choice to follow Jesus gives me the right to know the entire depth of God's love and receive its fullness into my heart. To know God better, I must spend more time with Him—thinking about Him, reading about Him, communicating with Him, listening to Him, and laboring with Him. If I practice this throughout the week in every sphere of my life, then on the Sabbath God Himself comes to me through His invisible Spirit, blessing and sanctifying me. This process is invisible to the eye, but it is written in the Word of God.

Exodus 31:12-13 says: "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak thou also unto the children of Israel, saying, Verily My sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations; that ye may know that I am the Lord that doth sanctify you."

What love God has expressed in all His commandments! What care for human happiness! What joy it is to have such a caring Lord!

But concerning the Sabbath, God said, "Remember..." Why must we remember? The bustle of life causes us to forget the One to Whom we belong and what He desires to give us. God gives us time—His time. And within this time He gives Himself. God does this every week and watches to see what I will do with this Gift and how I will use It.

Try giving yourself to a friend or loved one for a single day within the bounds of God's law. You will immediately see who you are to that person and how your time is valued. But God gives Himself continually.

Someone may say that every day belongs to God, and this is indeed true. But God has one special day on which He gives Himself to me. What love! And who will appreciate it? Who is

able to understand and receive such a thing? My mind, limited by the flesh, cannot contain it.

Yet God's love living in my heart reveals this mystery to me and brings into my mind all the beauty and harmony of obedience and unity with God on this day. Creation is united with the Creator, love with Love. Outwardly nothing unusual takes place, but my soul and spirit withdraw from the bustle, become calm, rest, reset, and are renewed.

God is Love, and when I receive Him, I also receive His love. It comes together with Him.

It is impossible to learn love outside obedience to the law.

"Love is the fulfilling of the law." Romans 13:10.

Love does not need to be compelled to obey; it is obedience itself. Love reveals to me the spirit and beauty of every commandment, showing within the law the magnificence and harmony of God's character, His mercy and justice.

God gives Himself in time. Where else can such a gift be found?

It is also interesting that throughout Eternity the Sabbath will remain the very day of worship that all the saved will honor in a special way. Once each month they will come into God's presence for fruit from the Tree of Life, and every Sabbath they will come to worship God. They will receive this gift throughout Eternity, and Love in its pure form and fullness will be their eternal possession.

At present, preparations are being made for our relocation to Heaven, and we must leave as much as possible upon this Earth, not forgetting to renounce anything. Love points out to me everything that defiles my life and is displeasing in the sight of Heaven.

God gives Himself and, as He watches me, waits to see what I will give Him in return.

1. In the light of this lesson, please read Exodus 20:8-11 and Deuteronomy 5:12-15.

2. What do these passages have in common, and how do they differ? What new insight did you see in the interpretation of God's commandment in Deuteronomy?
3. Did you hear anything new for yourself in this lesson? If so, what?
4. Do you see God's love for you in the Sabbath commandment?
5. Read Isaiah 66:23 and answer: why will we worship God every month? Where is the explanation found in the Bible? See Revelation 22:2.
6. What blessings does the Sabbath bring to a person?
7. Why does the world keep another day holy?

## Lesson 36. Help—A Language of Love

One day Jesus came to the home of His friend Lazarus. The Lord enjoyed the warm, friendly atmosphere of this place, and therefore He loved to be there. The home of Lazarus is noted in the Bible as a special place of emotional rest for our Savior.

And now the Guest arrives, accompanied by many disciples. They are tired from the journey; they all need to rest and eat. Water is needed to wash everyone's feet, and a place must be prepared where all of them can settle comfortably.

Here is a question: would you like to receive such guests for a short time and accommodate them in your home? Jesus and the twelve apostles are visiting you! What wonderful selfies you could take! But everyone who has arrived is hungry.

Two sisters lived in this house: Mary and Martha. They both loved Jesus, and He loved them. I think that somewhere in their hearts these young women dreamed of having a Husband like Him—Someone Who was not merely a well-known young Man, but also a personal Friend of their family. Yet despite all His love, Jesus proposed to neither of them. How their hearts must have languished as they awaited His choice! But now Christ came to visit once again and set the whole house in motion. Martha quickly understood what needed to be done and began preparing an abundant meal. She rejoiced that in this way she could express her love for her dear Friend, and her happiness knew no bounds. Martha and Mary began preparing the meal together. Jesus took the place of honor in the home and began telling His listeners something interesting. The neighbors surely came into the house as well. Then something unusual happened. Mary left the kitchen, went to Jesus, sat at His feet, and began listening to His words. Christ's disciples involuntarily turned their eyes toward this young woman and, while listening to Jesus, became absorbed in looking at her. Mary, paying attention to nothing else, caught every word of Christ and entered deeply into the meaning of His teaching.

Her thirst for knowledge of the truth and her love for the Lord are especially noted in the pages of the Bible.

Suddenly something remarkable happened. Martha interrupted this beautiful conversation and, reproaching Mary for her carelessness, asked Jesus to influence her sister and point out her direct responsibility—caring for the guests. The disciples' eyes turned toward Martha. I think many appreciated her skill as a homemaker and her diligence, while some may have imagined her as the mistress of their own home. Martha's ability to manage a household reminded them of the woman described in the final verses of the Proverbs of Solomon. I suppose this was not the disciples' first visit to this house, and they all knew Mary and Martha well. Perhaps many of them sided with Martha, considered her reproach just, and were ready to show Mary her proper place in the home, but Jesus spoke before any of them could. We read in Luke 10:41-42: "And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her."

In another Gospel we read in John 12:2-3: "There they made Him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with Him. Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment."

Once again Martha serves, while Mary does something difficult to understand. Yet in both cases Jesus praises Mary, while Martha's language of love appears to go unappreciated. This time Martha remains silent, for Jesus had helped them by performing the greatest miracle for their family—raising their brother Lazarus from the dead. Now Martha is ready to labor silently, placing all her love into helping the Lord Jesus and caring for His comfort. Did Jesus appreciate her labor? Yes. Otherwise, we would not have read about it. No detail of any service into which all one's love is placed escapes the Lord's notice.

Help is a language of love. It is the most difficult and problematic language for people who do not speak it. They find it hard to learn. Those who speak precisely this language of love voice the most complaints about other languages, considering their own the most correct and understandable. And there is little one can say in response. Deeds of love are visible. An action has been performed and has produced a visible result. If it is captured in a video or photograph, it can also be shown to others. Deeds are difficult to dispute. They are evident. Everything else seems like empty sound and not so important.

Yet help is not the only language of love; it is one of the many languages through which love is expressed, and everyone must always remember this. If I do not speak this language, reproaches from those who do are guaranteed. They usually sound like this: "Show me your deeds!"

Unfortunately, this is indeed what happens. When people do not understand this, such statements very often discourage and deprive of enthusiasm those who are accustomed to expressing their love differently. As a result, a person falls silent and withdraws inward, often ceasing to speak even in a language they understand.

How often families collapse simply because spouses do not understand one another, attempting to express love in their own way without considering that they are foreigners to each other.

Deeds are visible to everyone, and they cannot be disputed. All the other languages, with the exception of gifts, have a more spiritual and emotional expression.

When I begin speaking with a person in their language of help, it is not difficult for me to express my friendliness in this way, and the person near me understands me perfectly. Their heart opens, and the person may decide that from now on I will always communicate in this manner. As a sign of gratitude, they may offer to help me in return, but I find it difficult to accept because I await and value a different expression of love.

Nevertheless, out of love for the person, I agree. But if I have learned this language or speak it as my native tongue, we will form a wonderful team. It is true that other “foreigners” will find it difficult to be friends with us. We may simply overwhelm them with our experience.

Does God speak this language of love? Absolutely! From morning until evening He is occupied with caring for our needs, helping us in all our cares, and participating in all our plans and affairs, endowing us with strength, wisdom, and skill. When our human resources come to an end and we begin crying out to Heaven, help arrives and the answer becomes evident.

At the same time, the Lord desires that when I speak the language of help, I should not judge those who express their love differently. He expects me to seek ways of reaching the hearts of those near me in their native language.

When I express rudeness, anger, or hostility in the language of love native to the person near me, I commit a dangerous act. If that person helped me and I declare their deeds empty and worthless, destroying them, it may become a genuine tragedy for them. For example, a wife washed the floor, placing all her love into the task, and I walked across it in my boots. What disrespect! How many reproaches follow! “You do not love me!” Yet I merely decided to retrieve something quickly, without any evil intention. I simply did not notice that the floor was clean. But my wife’s heart is broken. Because I do not understand her language of love, I interpret what happened as one more prohibition in my own home and begin walking through a “minefield.”

Look at many family conflicts. For the most part, they arise between “foreigners” who do not wish or are unable to understand what is expected of them and why they themselves are not understood.

Agape Love teaches the language of help and knows how to speak it properly, while preserving a person’s right to their native language.

1. In the light of this lesson, please read James 2:14-18; 3:13; and 4:17.
2. What did you understand from this lesson?
3. Using the verses above, explain how faith, deeds, help, and the other languages of love can be combined.
4. Are you familiar with this language of love? How can it manifest itself in practice?
5. In what ways can the language of help be expressed?
6. Read Genesis 2:18. According to God's plan, what does a wife's help to her husband consist of?
7. Is it worth learning the language of help if it is not the native language of your heart?

## Lesson 37. My Self-Worth

Our world is one great hospital in which you and I live. Sick people surround us, and we are no exception. Illnesses are of different kinds. They are divided into physical, spiritual, and emotional illnesses. There is also a dangerous virus called “sin” which, upon entering a person, begins to destroy the body, soul, personality, reason, and intellect. Outwardly a person may look wonderful, while the inner world is seized by trembling, fear, and anxiety, and there is no peace in the soul.

Depression has become one of the world’s leading illnesses, and when scientists see this diagnosis, they themselves grow discouraged by their inability to help the patient. They invent chemical remedies to suppress the symptoms of the illness.

In such a situation, people are taught to evaluate themselves properly. There are even concepts such as “low and high self-esteem.” Training sessions are held in which psychologists teach their secrets to help a person raise their self-esteem and emerge independently from discouragement and anguish. And perhaps looking at oneself and one’s problems from another perspective can help.

But this evaluation of oneself has one significant weakness: I think about myself on the basis of my own worldview, relying upon my personal perception of reality.

It is no secret that the same situation can be viewed and responded to in different ways. One person may see a problem in it, another an opportunity, and another may see nothing at all. Such a worldview can be manipulated very easily. Advertising companies, television programs, and various media create for us an image of what we should pursue and what we truly need. One can very easily enter a dead end in an open place without understanding one’s true value.

To understand the true value of every person and my own real worth, I believe we should turn to the original Source—to the

One Who created humanity—and learn personally from Him what He thinks and says about this matter. The answer comes from the opening pages of the Bible.

I am not an accidental product of evolution, but a carefully conceived creation of God. When God designed the human being, He fashioned a masterpiece in miniature—a masterpiece that reveals the beauty and depth of His character and, through its perception, reflects the image of the Creator.

Every cell of my body was carefully designed by the Heavenly Designers. The entire organism was arranged so that it knew by itself what to do and how to function. My will, reason, and intellect possessed the ability to think, make decisions, consider, and analyze. I was given the gift of speech so that I could communicate with my Creator and with beings like myself. Within me was placed the ability to produce people like myself.

And in addition to all this, I can express my feelings and love.

How did it happen? God took the dust of the ground and with His own hands fashioned from it the likeness of a human being who resembled Him. Then He breathed His own breath into this lifeless form. The spirit transformed it into a living soul in which both the masculine and feminine principles were placed. This testifies that these principles are inherent in God.

How did the first man evaluate himself? I think he did not consider this question but simply rejoiced that he existed. When, by observing the animal world, he understood that he was alone and that it would be good to have a person equal to himself, God created from Adam's rib a masterpiece and the highest invention of His creative work—a woman. She was a being completely opposite to man, yet highly gifted, emotional, intuitive, and joyful.

I imagine Adam's astonishment and delight when he awoke and saw the woman who had been created from him and for him. She was not a robot, but a free person capable of making decisions independently, choosing, and arranging her own life.

They became acquainted, chose one another, decided to form a family, and married. God blessed this marriage and sanctified it.

And we are the direct descendants of these first parents, who were created in the image of God.

The enemy of souls led the first people into disobedience, and humanity became sinful. According to justice and law, they should have died. But God did not leave humanity in this condition. He decided to redeem people from the power of death by making a payment that would satisfy the demands of the law. God chose to give the life of His Only Begotten Son as a ransom for sin, thereby saving humanity from the power of lawlessness and death, so that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have Eternal life. What a tremendous price! How highly God valued every person! My true worth is equal to the shed Blood of Jesus. My personal self-evaluation cannot correspond to the true price paid for me. God desires that I understand this correctly and always remember it. God's task now is to bring me to an awareness of my true worth so that I may build my life upon this understanding. Jesus loves me, and His sacrifice for my sin proves this love, opening before me limitless opportunities for development and spiritual growth.

In order not to limit my capacity for growth, God offers me Himself within me, calling this by a word I can understand—Agape Love. While endowing me with qualities of His Divinity, He leaves me an ordinary human being who has an extraordinary relationship with Heaven.

How do you think I should evaluate myself in such a position? My self-worth is founded upon God's personal evaluation of me in the light of the sacrifice offered, the shed Blood of Jesus, and the power of the Holy Spirit, Who transforms my mind and character into the likeness of God.

If I am to evaluate myself at all, it must be solely according to this Divine criterion and perspective.

I cannot forbid others to express their self-evaluation, lowering or raising it, but I can base my own only upon God's opinion of

me—and His opinion is very high and remains consistently unchanging.

Love very quickly enables me to understand my true worth. It is not ashamed of my appearance or my status in society. It is not troubled by my former life and my sins. Love has a purpose—to reveal and restore the image of God within me. Love confidently accomplishes this task.

Love demonstrates itself to people and gives itself to them, while before God it reveals my righteousness and holiness—never the reverse.

Where love is, there God is also.

And how do you, my friends, evaluate what God has already valued so highly?

1. In the light of this lesson, please read Isaiah 13:12; 43:4; and John 10:14–16.
2. What did you understand from this lesson?
3. How does God value you in the light of the verses above?
4. Please explain how you evaluate your life and yourself personally.
5. Read Proverbs 31:10. Do you agree with this evaluation? How great is it? Does it apply to you?
6. Is it important to evaluate yourself in the light of God's sacrifice?
7. How highly does Jesus value you?

## Lesson 38. Communication—A Language of Love

The greatest gift given to a human being is the ability to express thoughts and feelings in words. In addition, we receive the ability to perceive what we hear, transforming it in our minds into particular images and feelings. People were created to communicate with one another. From a person's words, one can very quickly determine the level of that person's intellectual development, as well as who the person is, what interests them, what they live by, and what they feed their mind upon.

Words can express our love and our attitude toward other people. When communicating with one another, we perceive not only the meaning of what is said but also the intonation and spirit that give the words their true meaning. Try saying the same phrase with a smile, with an impassive expression, and with an angry grimace. Each time it will sound different. If a person cannot speak, that person is considered ill, and people try to provide healing.

For many people, communication is their language of love—a language in which they can perceive and express their finest feelings very well. We all understand this language, but not everyone speaks it. Words of love may sound different, but they have one purpose: to make another person's life better, kindle a lamp of joy and inspiration in the heart of someone near us, and adorn another person's life with a beautiful perception of reality. Love expressed in words is a seed that, upon entering another person's heart, begins accomplishing there the purpose for which it was spoken. Words of love possess a special power to transform a person's soul and give new direction to their thoughts and feelings.

The expression "I love you" carries a special life-giving power that imparts the strongest charge to a person's soul. Unfortunately, the world has reduced this phrase to the level of animal and confectionery perception, using it to express lustful

or consumer desires and thereby degrading the true meaning of love. Yet love still exists, and it can express itself very skillfully through this phrase. Words of strong affection spoken at the right time and place can transform a person's life and turn their consciousness in a new direction.

Something happened to me when I attended a camp meeting in Novi Obikhody, Ukraine, in 2010, where the Lord gave me many new friends. I remain in contact with them to this day. As I was returning home by bus, one of these friends telephoned me and said during our conversation, "Andrey, we love you." To me this sounded like the explosion of a bomb. A revolution took place in the thoughts and feelings of my heart. I realized that someone in this world needed me and that I brought much joy and awakened good emotions. I cannot say exactly what this friend meant, but his words gave my thoughts a new impulse and direction. Having experienced such a wonderful transformation of my worldview, I decided to help other people evaluate themselves differently as well. I wanted to kindle this fire in the hearts of those near me. I thought that if it had helped me so greatly, it would help others too. I began asking God for wisdom and started to act. I can tell you at once that I gained even more friends. My words of love are not merely words, but a conscious decision to live and act in precisely this way toward those near me. I will never speak them into the wind or for selfish interests, because I understand that behind these words stands God Himself, Who confirms the word of His servants and performs what they declare.

In response to my words of love, I often hear, "Show me deeds," or, "Those are only words." At first I could not understand such an attitude, but then I realized that these people speak other languages of love and await expressions of this gift that are familiar to them.

Nevertheless, our words of love possess a definite power. They are the most powerful weapon, capable of rebuilding ruins, healing souls, raising what has died, curing what is sick, destroying evil, and creating beauty in the life of any person.

And if this gift is my language of love and receives Heavenly support, it can accomplish far more than I can imagine.

If I do not possess Heavenly Agape, I will be able to express and give only my human affection, which is very quickly exhausted and becomes useless under serious trials. Within each of us is placed the ability to love and receive love, but without connection to God, the true Source of love, all my abilities are limited and do not possess the power that can overcome and endure all things.

Communication in the spirit of Agape Love has a Heavenly origin. It is precisely this kind of communication that establishes the laws of the Heavenly Kingdom in the lives of friends. Words of love can express the principles of Heavenly relationships among people in a very accessible way.

Our words are not merely sounds, but a special power of the soul closely connected with the invisible spiritual world. The realm of spirits has its own laws and rules. Angels possess a certain strength and authority limited by human choice. In other words, my words give them the opportunity to act according to the command or request that has proceeded from my mouth. If they are words of blessing and love, good angels take them up and transform them into actions, multiplying their power and accomplishing the purpose for which they were spoken. If they are words of cursing, demons immediately take them up and begin their destructive work.

We are told that by our words we will be condemned or justified, and there is meaning in this. It is my words that tell the spiritual world what fills my heart. Through my words I pronounce either sentence or justification upon myself.

What does prayer consist of? Good deeds? Gifts? Touches? I think that through words in prayer I can best express to God the essence of my soul. All my deeds, gifts, and touches reflect the true condition of my spirit, formed within me through simple prayers spoken in uncomplicated phrases during fellowship with God.

Prayer is a collection of proper words through which I pour out my soul before the Creator: expressing gratitude, asking for help and wisdom, interceding for close friends and enemies, and asking God to act. If instead of words of prayer I decide to show God my deeds, I will encounter serious problems in my relationship with Him. But my sincere words of prayer are capable of shaking God's throne and calling the Creator to action.

We should not underestimate the power of what is spoken. Words of love work miracles in my life and in the lives of those near me.

The language of love called communication is very diverse. It has many branches and offshoots, each possessing its own influence and power. These may be words of love, instruction, or teaching; words of reproof or punishment; words of support or reproach; words of praise and inspiration. Words of love can create new families, reunite broken relationships, awaken affection between people, and build friendships that last a lifetime. Such words may be spoken aloud or expressed in letters. They are sent to give love to people. They accomplish the purpose for which they are spoken.

And if we consider that the human being was originally created in the image and likeness of God, it becomes clear that God's plan includes restoring this image in sinful humanity and afterward revealing to other people, through human words of love, the true beauty of God's character.

My language of love is a powerful instrument of God for fulfilling His plans.

1. In the light of this lesson, please read Isaiah 44:26; Matthew 12:37; Matthew 5:37; and Luke 6:45.
2. Do you understand the importance and power of spoken words?
3. What power do your words have in your life?
4. What did you understand from this lesson? What new truth was revealed to you?
5. How can love be expressed in words?

6. Who is an idle talker? How do such people differ from people who keep their word? Read James 3:2-12.
7. Do you understand this language of love?

## Lesson 39. Hospitality—A Language of Love

There is a saying: “My home is my castle.” And indeed, in our world there are special territories—a special world in which every person has a private sphere of habitation, a dwelling where one feels at home. There are many places I can enter freely. But I have no right to enter private property without asking or receiving a special invitation. When someone invites me to visit, I experience a special blessing as I enter another person’s private space.

Invitations are of different kinds. They may be for business, acquaintance, or friendship; with or without a meal; for a short time or for an extended stay. All this depends upon the situation and status involved.

There have been different occasions in my life when, after spontaneously traveling to a worship service in another city, I did not know what I would do when it ended. I simply waited to see what the Lord would offer me and how He would arrange my time. I have grown accustomed to the fact that the situation may unfold in different ways, and therefore I try to expect that, after receiving the blessing of the believers’ gathering, I will return home and spend the rest of the day there. Yet somewhere deep in the heart there is an aching loneliness from feeling that no one is interested in you, that no one needs or notices you. The larger the gathering, the greater the likelihood that you will remain alone.

Many times I have witnessed unfamiliar people or guests from other cities come to our church as well. After the worship service ended, they silently waited for someone to show them attention, and after receiving only a polite handshake from church members, they departed alone. Each time I felt an aching sorrow for these people because no one had shown interest in them, and they left God’s house without the prospect of friendly fellowship in a close circle of new acquaintances.

In the past, when my wife was in the church, we knew that on the coming Sabbath we would have guests or would visit someone else. Now no one can enter our home under any pretext, and it is impossible to reconcile oneself to this. But the most terrible thing is that one grows accustomed to it. All my friends know that the way into my home is closed to them forever, but they often invite me to their homes so that at least there we can have fellowship. It is always such a joy to enter the private space of friends and bring them a blessing, while dreaming that someday my own home will also become hospitable and open to someone.

The Word of God teaches us that love for strangers—that is, hospitality—is an inseparable part of the culture of a believer. Among many peoples and cultures, it is still honored as something sacred and obligatory. The modern lifestyle in many countries has destroyed this good tradition, and loneliness, while reaping an abundant harvest of mental illness, has become the norm of our time.

If a believer can find comfort in solitude through prayer and by watching or reading spiritual material, what are those who do not know God to do? Television and the internet cope very well with the problem of loneliness, but they do not carry the blessings of personal contact with another person or friend.

Love is hospitable. It knows how to express itself in this language. Love is able to extend and accept invitations, carrying a blessing wherever it awaits guests or is itself received. Love understands the structure of life in religiously mixed families where one spouse does not wish to invite any believers into the home. But love can invite them to its own home.

I know many stories and situations in which the spirit of hospitality kindled a Divine fire in people, awakening interest and thirst for a deeper knowledge of God. And how many believers came to Christ through the hospitality of God's children? Only Eternity will reveal the power and influence of this language of love.

It is precisely through fellowship with those near me—by visiting their homes or inviting them into mine—that I discover opportunities to know a person more closely and allow that person to know me. Very often, through the spirit of hospitality, we become very close and dear friends.

There are, of course, exceptions that are very noticeable and bring no blessing. For example, a guest may use your kindness to satisfy an appetite or other needs while making it clear that you are of no interest as a person and are not needed as a friend. Although not everyone is like this, one such guest can damage the reputation of all fellow guests. But love seeks not its own and simply gives itself in every place, without depriving a person of wisdom and sound judgment.

My private space is that special place where my spirit receives a unique advantage in giving those near me the opportunity to know me as an unusual person. This opens ways for me to gain new friends very quickly and give them my love and friendship. What joy it is to enter the unknown world of a new friend and sow seeds of love there.

My life has included a great variety of visits, but not one of them has faded from memory. Each has been imprinted upon my consciousness forever, creating its own image and spiritual illustration of every home. There are always special people associated with something bright, delicious, and joyful. Whenever you meet such people, you are happy.

Jesus loved to accept invitations. We read that He never disdained the hospitality even of people with questionable reputations, which often provoked the displeasure of the spiritual leaders of that time. The Lord understood that such people possessed souls and hearts capable of opening to God's grace and later becoming sources of abundant blessing to others. What was true then remains true today.

Once Jesus Himself invited Himself to the home of the publican Zacchaeus, greatly surprising and delighting him. The account of their meeting ended with this publican and his entire

household becoming disciples of Christ and devoting their possessions to serving those near them.

Hospitality is a special spirit and a special power that opens many opportunities for good deeds.

The glory of God's presence accompanies hospitable people, but not everyone understands this, and not every person uses hospitality for the glory of God.

Love speaks this language of love and, knowing the power of its influence, develops a strategy for capturing those near us in its nets.

I have often noticed that very hospitable and generous people do not become poorer through exercising these qualities. On the contrary, it seems that with every new guest they receive tremendous profit in other areas of life. There is something mysterious and supernatural in this.

Knowing that frequent guests usually place an additional burden upon the women who manage the home, I always try to acknowledge their labor and care through understanding and compliments and, when possible, to support them by bringing food of my own if I am invited in advance. What joy it is to be in a circle of friends, whether in their home or mine, sharing love and binding one another with ties of friendship so that these kind feelings toward those near us may always remain in the heart.

I have been told that churches in Canada have a system in which a list of all church members is prepared each year. This list records who will visit whom and when after the worship service. The schedule is then given to all members, who know in advance where they will be or who will come to them. It is an interesting idea. And God blesses such fellowship.

1. In the light of this lesson, please read 1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:7-9; and 1 Peter 4:9.
2. What did you understand from this lesson?
3. Are you familiar with this language of love?

4. Did you receive any new revelations while studying this subject?
5. How do you understand Hebrews 13:2? What angels are meant in this verse?
6. Is it worth inviting guests if you are unable to serve them an elaborate meal?
7. How can you show hospitality if you are unable to invite a person into your home?

## Lesson 40. Material Assistance—A Language of Love

Money is a means established by society through which we pay for services and goods and determine the value of anything that must be evaluated in some way. Money will never cease to exist. It has different forms and types. Money may be metallic, paper, electronic, or virtual. But whatever form it takes, society must accept it for payment and valuation. Every nation has its own national currency within its territory, recognized as the principal monetary unit for measuring goods and services within that country.

It is for money that we spend our life, earning or acquiring it. We must understand that money is not trash or mere paper. It is something we strive to obtain throughout life, investing our time, strength, and talents in the process. Yet while accepting this state of affairs, we should not deify money or elevate its acquisition to the goal of our entire life.

Although money becomes an idol for many people, it is not evil in itself. The love of money is the root of all evil. At the same time, money is not the source of happiness, although it can make many people conditionally happy.

Love sets itself in opposition to money, yet it does not deny money's importance in our world. Love teaches us to earn and use this means with diligence, wisdom, and consistency.

Will there be money in Heaven? With what will we pay for one another's services and goods there? I think I will not be mistaken if I answer that Agape Love is Heaven's unit for measuring the value of every service and that it alone will be the single recognized currency circulating throughout the Universe.

In our world, love also has its price and its demand.

Material assistance is a language of love when it proceeds from pure motives and has sound judgment at its foundation. When I extend such kindness to someone near me or support a project from my personal funds or savings, I thereby give a portion of the life I spent earning those resources.

Material assistance becomes especially precious and meaningful when I provide it at the proper time, placing all my love into it.

Reading Mark 12:41—“And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury...” —I understand that God watches me very attentively and is interested in how I manage what He has entrusted to me. The deed of the poor widow, who gave to God’s cause all that she had to live upon, will forever remain an unsurpassed example of self-sacrifice. Throughout all ages, this small deed of sincere love for God, which received the highest appraisal in the eyes of Jesus, will continue to touch human hearts.

Have any of you been in need? Has there been a time when you understood that you had nothing to live on, nothing to eat, and did not know what to do?

I remember a time in 1994 when my wife and I were living in Germany and renting a room in a hotel. I had just found a job but had not yet earned anything, and all our resources had reached zero. We had seventeen German marks in savings. When my wife went to the kitchen and left the door open, someone stole the wallet, and we were left without any means. What an interesting condition of soul! At that time I already believed in God but did not yet know how to pray. Yet my soul began crying out to Heaven and asking what we should do. We went to the bank, withdrew the last single mark from our account, went to a store, bought something to eat, and that was all. Where could we go? Whom could we ask? What could we eat? Everything was uncertain. Strangers surrounded us, and the language was unfamiliar. Suddenly a neighbor came, gave us fifty marks, and offered to drive us in his car to a supermarket for groceries. Our joy knew no bounds. The neighbor imposed no conditions for repayment; he simply

decided to help us. How timely it was, and what joy it brought us!

I think many of you have experienced or are now experiencing something similar, and perhaps such an experience still lies ahead for someone.

When I help poor people, I lend to the Lord. Jesus identifies Himself with those who are in need, sickness, and darkness. He teaches us that by helping such people, we lay up treasure for ourselves in Heaven.

This part of society does not need words; people in such circumstances need something that will relieve their need and suffering. Love sees this and seeks an opportunity to help.

But we must also understand that poverty is sometimes not a misfortune of fate, but a condition of a person's mind. If you give such a person everything without measure, their way of thinking will cause them to become poor again within a short time. Therefore, in addition to providing material assistance, it is worth teaching a person to earn independently if they have that ability.

Love finds pleasure in helping the poor. It places its whole self into every deed. By giving material assistance to others, I open people's hearts to friendship, relieve their suffering, and give them hope.

I show spiritual beings that my heart is where my treasure is. I demonstrate that the values of this world do not draw my heart toward themselves but give me an opportunity to serve others. I give my life to those near me in the form of money and invest it in various missionary projects, thereby bringing God's Kingdom nearer.

This is a difficult language of love, but it is worth learning, for speaking it brings many blessings to everyone—and to me first of all.

My assistance is evaluated not by the amount given to another person, but by the action and motive I possessed while giving it.

1. In the light of this lesson, please read 2 Peter 1:5-8.

2. What did you understand from this lesson?
3. Please name three or more Bible verses that speak about material assistance to those near us and its benefits.
4. Did you receive any new revelations?
5. Why must sound judgment be exercised in acts of kindness?
6. How often may material assistance be given to those near us?
7. Will a person become poor by helping poor people?

## Lesson 41. My Language of Love

When I became acquainted with the study materials about languages of love, I began observing those near me and myself, desiring to understand which language of love each of us spoke. By calling this characteristic a language of love, I used a formulation presented by someone else. Now I would like to emphasize that all these languages of love, being human, are often so deeply intertwined with personal selfishness that instead of expressing the blessing of love, they express the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—although this is not always true of everyone.

These languages may change in different people with age and also depending upon place of residence or physical condition. Then my language of love becomes the one I need most at that particular time.

While children are young, they understand all the languages and speak them wonderfully. Therefore, when everything is done with love, it is very difficult to understand which language is closest to them. Children accept nothing without love. Being very direct, they can quickly tell us about their needs.

During adolescence, very strange things take place because the desire to imitate the crowd and belong among other teenagers dominates generally accepted family values and traditions. The process of forming a personality and developing independence begins.

As a person matures, different crises and trials are experienced in connection with changes in occupation, family status, and place of residence. Sometimes this changes a person's needs and characteristics very quickly.

In old age, when physical strength and inner energy decline, elderly people reconsider their lives and need special attention and care. At this time their worldview, values, and language of love change as well.

Yet throughout this changing world, Agape Love remains that same unchanging love founded not upon human characteristics but upon God's constancy. In its essence, it is the principal language of love of every person, and because it carries God's blessing, it can be understood by every "foreigner."

Let us take me as an example. I decided that communication is my native language and that I understand it best and can express my love through it. Yet at the same time, I notice that when I meet a person dear to me who addresses me in the language of touch, placing love and friendliness into it, I understand this language with pleasure and can communicate in it as well. At that moment other languages are not important to me; my heart needs precisely this manifestation of love.

If I am in great need and require help, words of love are good but not very appropriate in that situation. Simple assistance will be more pleasing to my soul than beautiful phrases. I will appreciate every movement and action that relieves my need. This will be closest to me at that moment.

When someone gives me something I greatly need or have dreamed about for a long time, what they say or how they embrace me becomes less important. I see that all the love of my friend or the person near me is concentrated in this gift. That special attention is very close and dear to me, and I will remember the gift throughout my life, treasuring it in my heart.

When I am lonely and my soul desires a close friend nearby, I understand how precious the time we spend together in the spirit of love is. Even if we simply remain silent while loving one another, everything else is less important. No gifts, words, or embraces will brighten my loneliness when my soul longs for someone close to stay beside me and simply love me without any condition. This is especially precious at the very time I need it.

When I have nothing to eat and no opportunity to buy food because I simply have no money, all the words of love from my well-fed friend will not drive away my hunger. They are good, but not when my stomach is empty. If I languish from hunger or

thirst, all the inedible gifts in the world will not comfort me. I want to eat, and this is the language I can understand best at that moment.

When my soul longs for a kind word of approval and support during another trial, everything else may not be entirely appropriate. During such periods of my life, I await and value kind words in particular and desire to hear precisely them.

When Christ was crucified and the sins of all humanity were placed upon Him, what did His soul need most? I think that amid all those cries and mockery, Jesus longed to hear at least one word of support and approval—at least one word of faith. It was not so important who would speak it. How greatly the heart of Jesus needed this! And that thirst was satisfied. The man crucified with Christ for his crimes addressed Jesus as King, as his Savior, and as High Priest: “Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom.” What comfort, what faith, what a beautiful language of love from one who had no understanding of agape! What a wonderful sermon! It was the shortest sermon in the world, yet it turned more corrupted hearts toward God than any other. And it continues to touch the soul to this day.

Do you, my friend, desire to hear your language of love at the time your soul longs for it most? Who will satisfy this thirst and speak in the language you understand and need? There is One Who knows all your needs, One Who continually thinks about your happiness and knows how to speak with you and when to give you what you need. Our Heavenly Friend Jesus loves you deeply and understands perfectly how to give you what you long for. He awaits your prayers, desires to hear your requests, and wholeheartedly longs to give you more than you can imagine. But without your consent and request, Jesus will not give you what you desire. He does not wish to violate your freedom of choice. Therefore, tell Him about your needs and pour out your heart before Him. He will hear and answer.

My language of love is whatever I need most at that moment. The Lord understands this perfectly and very often meets my needs by prompting those near me to address me in precisely the language I understand best at that time.

God often prompts me as well to address my friends in some language unfamiliar to me. They are surprised, because this occurs at the very time they especially need it. I think everyone has experienced this.

And yet, in every approach to another person, regardless of my need, I should place all my Heavenly love into every deed, every word, and every motive. Then any language of love I speak becomes right, necessary, and understandable.

Very often, however, I cannot determine by myself what you need, my friend, if you remain silent. How can I give you what you long for if you do not tell me about it? My heart is attuned to love, but it also has ears to hear you. Therefore, simply do not remain silent. People cannot read one another's thoughts.

Strangely enough, sometimes precisely because of my silence I do not receive what I need most, even though people who can help surround me.

Ask, and it shall be given you!

1. Please read James 2:14-17 and 1 John 3:18-20.
2. Name three Bible verses that fit our lesson and came to your mind.
3. What did you understand from this lesson?
4. What revelations did you receive while studying the materials on this subject?
5. How can you understand the true need of someone dear to you if that person remains silent?
6. What does it mean to love in deed and in truth?
7. What should I do if I do not know my language of love?

## Lesson 42. The Salt of Love

We are told that we are the salt of the earth. These words are a very good illustration of how God sees His children who live in love and obedience. The entire Sermon on the Mount is devoted to love for God and for people. In it, Jesus explained how those who are filled and moved by love conduct themselves. The Sermon on the Mount contains a very profound meaning that is revealed in special beauty when my heart overflows with this great gift and with a thirst for still more love.

Have you eaten a salad or other food prepared without salt? It has a natural taste and nourishes the body, but it often becomes very bland and tasteless. No restaurant will survive if it begins serving its patrons unsalted food. Of course, guests can be warned that every dish contains no salt, and someone may even like this, but salt nevertheless gives food a special flavor and in many cases preserves it from rapid spoilage and decay.

Love adorns every deed I perform and every language of love. Like salt, it dissolves into the contents of my life and permeates every corner of my thoughts and feelings, distributing itself evenly throughout every sphere of my being and activity.

The world does not even suspect how deeply indebted it is to the righteous people living in its cities and nations. Because of their presence, God bears long with our Earth and preserves it from destruction. In the example of Sodom, we can see the fate of a city in which even ten righteous people could not be found. Only Lot and his two daughters were saved; all the other inhabitants were destroyed by God's judgments for their wickedness. A similar fate awaits all the cities of the last days if no godly people remain within them.

The world lies in wickedness. Sin boldly raises its ugly head. God offers every person life, love, and His righteousness. God's grace is still available to everyone. But if people choose the dominion of another lord, then in the end God gives them the

right to live with that master and the right to die. Then everyone will understand how terrible sin is in the fullness of its wickedness and what a tyrant of the human soul that lord is whom people chose for themselves instead of God.

People do not value love. They mock it and crucify it without understanding what they are doing. Yet God continues to seek those whom He can endow with His love in order to save those who crucify and curse Him. What amazing love! God searches for lost sheep; God searches for the lost coin; God waits for His lost daughters and sons, and He is ready to run out to meet them, embrace them, and kiss them, if only they decide to return to Him.

If salt loses its strength, with what can it be restored? Can salt lose its properties? According to Christ's teaching, this can happen when, instead of God's blessings and the laws of love, I choose my own way of salvation and follow it. Because of my lawlessness, love grows cold within me. It becomes lukewarm, my heart ceases to burn, and I become content with what is happening to me. At the same time, I persuade myself that my life meets God's requirements.

But love exists. It has not died. It is available to everyone who lives with God in the heart. As such love extends its influence to the surrounding world, it preserves me from spoilage and decay. All my good deeds performed without love may be good in themselves, but they will nevertheless become bland and tasteless.

There will always be people who, while living in sin, desire to be loved and forgiven for everything so that they may feel comfortable in their lawlessness. When punishment threatens such believers, they greatly regret being caught, not what they did. These people ask for mercy, believing that others are obligated to forgive them at their request, while the heart remains evil. But when love touches the heart, it reveals a person's uncleanness and presents the prospect of change toward something better and Heavenly.

The presence of this gift is important in every language of love. Love may be rejected, but its influence will leave its flavor and its trace.

When you love, you will certainly encounter resistance and opposition from evil powers. The enemy of souls hates love and opposes it in every way. This is the reality of our own time as well. Therefore, you should not lose heart when you are rejected. Salt accomplishes its work with confidence, penetrating every sphere of public life. The influence of loving people is exceedingly great. These are precisely the people who will bring the history of our world to its conclusion by actively participating in the final events. But if the salt loses its strength, what should be done with it? Jesus expresses an equivocal attitude toward this tragedy. Yet at present He calls, offers, gives, and delivers His love and righteousness to everyone who is interested. Jesus waits for hearts to be opened to Him so that they may receive the limitless possibilities of love and happiness.

Christ's first sermon began with an account of the laws of blessedness and of who is worthy of it. The Savior showed that happiness is available to everyone who desires it and that love lies at its foundation.

It sounds strange: to love without love. Yet this is precisely how my carnal heart attempts to live. It plays at love without seeking to possess it. It is ready to declare its love, but in the eyes of others I become a hypocrite.

When God endows me with His power to love, the world, seeing it, often begins to call me the embodiment of evil. This is difficult to understand. Yet everyone perceives the language of love. Not every person desires to speak it, but everyone expects love to be shown toward them.

If love loses the power to love, what can make it loving? It sounds strange. Love exists in order to love. But if it becomes only a name behind which God's presence is absent—a pink heart on my T-shirt that everyone passing by can see—any person will understand that only empty words stand behind

such love. This condition has become the norm of life. Therefore, when I declare true love to such people, they habitually pass by, understanding that such a thing is simply impossible in a world of evolution where the strongest survive. Yet love advances and conquers.

Where can we obtain this love so that it truly loves? There is One Who is Love. He waits for my thirst so that He may meet my need for love. God desires my prayers for love so that He may answer. He hears when I ask and responds.

It is God's will that I should love; therefore, all Heaven awaits my decision to possess this gift. Without God I cannot love, and without my choice nothing will be given to me. To be the salt of the earth is my desire; to become salt is God's action within me in response to my choice.

1. Please read 1 Corinthians 13:1-3 and Matthew 5:13. Do these passages have anything in common?
2. What examples from the Bible came to your mind while studying this subject?
3. What did you understand from this lesson?
4. What revelations did you receive while studying the materials on this subject?
5. What must be done to become salt? How do you understand this symbol?
6. Are you a "salty" person?
7. At what point in life do we become salt?

## Lesson 43. The Heavenly Teacher

Jesus is the Name that attracts millions of minds desiring to comprehend the mystery of redemption, the mystery of the soul's salvation, and the mystery of God's love and grace.

How many people He brings to astonishment and silence when He gives them the opportunity to know Him and discover a new world of the Divine presence within a human being.

Our Lord Jesus is very tender and gentle. He communicates with every human soul so carefully and treats every person with such delicacy, regarding each soul as immeasurably precious and unique, that it never ceases to amaze me. At times I try with my human mind to understand God and imagine His essence, but I realize only that I am humanizing Him through my limited concepts, attempting to contain the immeasurable within myself. God is great! Great and marvelous are His works.

The character of the Creator, His true attitude toward people, and His infinite love are vividly reflected in the life of Jesus.

There was a time when I did not know Jesus. I did not even understand what this Name or the title "Christ" meant. I thought it was part of the slang used by beggars to obtain money for food.

Soviet culture attempted to degrade the Name of God so greatly that people began writing it with a lowercase letter and using it as an interjection between words. What a disgrace! And this was the culture in which I grew up. I was great in my own eyes, while God had a lowercase letter in my life.

But the time came when I also learned more about Christ—about His power, His love, and His wisdom. The book *The Great Controversy* greatly helped me in this knowledge. The love of Jesus began to attract me. I learned more and more about Him. New discoveries about the beauty of Christ's character amazed me. If any person were asked what kind of friend they would like to have, and if all the answers describing the qualities of a

true friend were gathered together, they would all point to the character of Jesus. Everyone dreams of Jesus but wants to have Him in the form of a person who can be seen, heard, and touched. Yet all earthly friends are imperfect, and even true friends are very few. Friends remain somewhere in our dreams.

But our Heavenly Friend is the same yesterday, today, and forever. When I ask Him to become my Friend, He immediately agrees and takes this place in my heart. It is remarkable that Jesus always remains that faithful and true Friend of Whom I could not even have dreamed. His devotion to friendship amazes and delights me. He studies my characteristics and habits, never condemns me, but adapts to the way of life and thoughts I choose for myself. If I change my daily routine, Jesus accepts this and participates in my life as I desire. If I decide to take up a sport, He teaches me the secrets and mysteries of that art. If I begin studying a branch of knowledge, He gives me wisdom there as well to comprehend its depths, mysteries, characteristics, and laws. If I want to build a house, the wisdom of Christ accompanies me in this too, prompting me what is best to do and in what order. I am amazed at how perfectly Jesus understands every sphere of human activity. Everywhere He is the unsurpassed Master and Teacher.

The most fascinating discoveries, however, occur when I begin studying the science of the soul's Salvation. All my investigations in this matter lead me to the Bible, to its history, and to the eternal truths set forth upon its pages. I begin to comprehend this Book, and a new, unexplored world opens before me. The Lord Himself enlightens my mind, drawing in my imagination the images and symbols about which I read in the Bible. It seems that I am studying theory alone, but this theory becomes my practical activity, changing my consciousness, habits, and lifestyle. I become different. In all these changes, I see the invisible Hand of my Heavenly Friend.

I begin to understand very clearly that He loves me—always, continually, unchangingly, and faithfully. Jesus does not reveal my secrets, gossip about me, laugh at my weaknesses and shortcomings, scold me for my mistakes, or find fault with me.

He respects my freedom and my choice and always takes into account what I choose for myself. Even if I set foot upon the wrong path and stubbornly continue along it, Jesus corrects me very gently. But sometimes He must raise His voice in order to save me from destruction and approaching danger.

The nearer I come to Jesus, the more clearly I hear the voice of His Spirit, Who teaches me everything good and useful.

Very often my Lord Jesus arranges a “cold shower” for my soul. When He sees my sin or error, He does not reconcile Himself to such a condition but sends me a trial or a message that sobers me and helps me come to my senses.

Jesus cares deeply about my spiritual purity. He never grows weary of cleansing my heart and always does so with great enthusiasm, using different methods and means.

He is my Friend—the very best Friend, the greatest and closest Friend. He is better than anyone in the world.

I share all my secrets with Jesus, and He reveals them to no one else. I ask Him for counsel, and He gives me a wise solution to every question. Sometimes I express dissatisfaction with His silence and apparent lack of involvement, but He shows me how much He has done for me. Then I feel ashamed because I simply failed to see His care.

Jesus also knows how to reveal my sins to me and expose the vices and unattractive sides of my life. Afterward He awaits my decision. I fall into despair and repent. I go to the Father, ask forgiveness in the Name of Jesus, and receive an answer.

I cast all my cares upon Him, for He cares for us. I receive deliverance. I ask for love, and Jesus begins teaching me.

He does everything so that I may become very much like Him in love; therefore, He personally teaches me this science. And I learn. As I comprehend it, I begin noticing within myself the manifestation of many qualities of Christ’s character. It is so fascinating and joyful! I long so greatly to share it.

The love of Christ is amazing and beautiful. But while it belongs only to Him, it remains merely a mystery and theory to me.

When love becomes mine, the most amazing lifelong adventure begins. I change; the laws of Eternity begin operating within me; I become entirely different. God's peace takes possession of my heart, and I find it very pleasant to live this way. Although storms and trials become ever stronger and fiercer, I am in an ark whose Captain is my Friend.

In knowing love, I become so united with Jesus that I rejoice in having become part of the Vine, even though I am only a small branch grafted into it by faith. Our love for one another has joined us so closely that without Him I simply do not desire to live—and indeed cannot.

He continues teaching me, revealing profound mysteries of love that I can apply in my life and thereby bring joy to His heart. Complete harmony reigns between us. I love, I am learning to love, and I am so happy. I understand that such a relationship with Jesus is available to every one of you, but for me it remains our personal relationship, and no one can take away this closeness. Perhaps someone does not understand this, but so it is. Jesus is my Friend, my Heavenly Teacher, and my Lord God.

1. Please read Isaiah 52:13-15 and 53:1-12.
2. Please tell something very good about Jesus. Who is He to you?
3. Did you hear anything new in this lesson? Did you receive any revelations or make any discoveries?
4. What did you understand from this subject?
5. Do you believe that Jesus desires to become your very best Friend?
6. What can you do to begin a friendship with Christ?
7. Do you understand who you are to Christ?

## Lesson 44. The Science of Love

What is the Bible to us, and what influence does it have upon us? Viewed from the outside, it is simply a printed volume with thin pages. But the Bible differs from other books in that it is called—and truly is—the Word of God, written by people moved by the Holy Spirit. The pages of this Book give us unique knowledge about God, His character, His love, and the plan of Salvation. We can also read in the Bible about the lives of believers and the history of different nations.

The Bible gives us information about Who God is, how I should live, and what will happen to me if I act in one way or another. From the pages of this Book, God Himself addresses me, desiring to reveal Himself to me, show me His will, teach me something, and change my thinking and worldview.

If I declare that the Bible presents only theory or merely the opinions of ordinary people, I risk understanding nothing for myself. If I study Holy Scripture as a historical book or a book of good advice, I will learn history and find a few useful things, but I will miss what is most important and receive no real benefit. The Bible will become a source of information to me and nothing more. I know people who read a great deal and thereby broaden their horizons, but this does not change their lives.

If, however, I turn to the Bible for new knowledge and help, desiring answers to my questions and wise counsel, I find them. If I seek to know God, understand what He desires from me, what He has prepared for me, and Who He is, I receive answers to these questions and expectations as well. The Bible suddenly comes alive and begins speaking with me. It does not merely give me information; it changes my thinking and my life. I begin hearing the Voice of God addressed to me from the pages of my Bible. I communicate with God, and He speaks with me. I become a different person. By faith in the invisible, I

comprehend the eternal—even though I study the very same Book as other people.

Why does it help one person and become a source of life, love, and inspiration, while for another it remains mere words and empty information? Everything depends upon the expectation with which a person approaches the Word of God.

I can say of myself that the Bible changed me for the better. It revealed the plan of my salvation to me. In it I learned about God's mercy and justice toward me. Through it I came to know God the Father and Jesus Christ, Whom He sent for my redemption. I believed God's promises concerning me, and they have been and continue to be fulfilled in my life. I was born again under the influence of the Holy Spirit, and I am preparing for Eternal life among holy beings. The Bible revealed my sins, and I repented of them. I brought them to God, and He set me free. God gave me a new heart and, as He promised, wrote His law within my thoughts. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; I live by faith in the Son of God and am His friend, having close and intimate fellowship with my Savior Jesus. All this is dissolved into my faith and becomes real and visible. Then deeds follow, telling everyone about the inward changes within me.

And yet I possess the very same Bible as other people.

Let us now try applying this same approach to our School of Love. I have no desire to exalt or single out anything. But please understand the principle involved in our approach to learning. If I believe that the Author of this School is the Holy Spirit, Who teaches me the Heavenly science of love, then He Himself will produce within me the changes and actions I desire to experience.

As a human being, I can do only what lies within my ability. I can tell something, describe my experiences, share my thoughts, and record my discoveries about love. This becomes information accessible to every person. If all these things are merely simple human philosophy, the reader will learn something and nothing more. But if the information has been

presented under the influence of the Holy Spirit as a revelation from above, then behind these simple words stands the One Who will communicate their power and meaning and produce the changes contained within His plans. The result depends upon the approach I choose in studying the science of love. I am learning together with you, presenting what I have experienced during the last twenty-seven years as I acquired the gift of God's love, underwent the testing of faith, and established practical skills. The fire the Lord kindled in my heart cannot be contained. I long to speak, write, and preach about it. When I sow seeds of love, in time I see them sprout. I rejoice that someone's life has become better and more beautiful. I love, and I understand what love is. I am not ashamed to speak about it or to tell of all the beauty of God's love that has found a place in my heart and mind. I do this joyfully, expecting nothing in return. I have already heard many things said against me, and I always take them to Jesus and ask, "Is this true?" He calms me and shows me His hands, enabling me to understand what reward awaits me. I humble myself and continue to love.

There are no losses in love and nothing I will regret when I do something with love. The science of love begins with the transformation of my heart. I learn the theory described in the Bible and ask God to bring it into my life. He begins revealing to me the mysteries of love's power, changing my thoughts and feelings step by step. I do and speak what fills my heart.

When I fill my thoughts with love, it begins cleansing me from within and driving sin from my life. This is a very painful process, but one that must be experienced. When I ask a physician to heal me, the physician does not promise painless procedures and sweet medicines, but asks me to endure while doing what is necessary. My Heavenly Physician likewise does not promise easy paths, but assures me that He will be near throughout all my sorrows and pain and will carry me in His arms when I feel entirely overwhelmed. God gives me hope for a better life, and this hope becomes reality.

Love is the beautiful condition of a soul born for Eternal life with God. It is complete freedom from the power of sin. It is

unending heartfelt joy and delight. It is understanding God's will and being able to hear His voice amid the noise of this world. It is the way of thinking of a righteous person, not a subject of an earthly kingdom.

Love is Christianity in its pure form, without unnecessary words, but with the expression of affection and hope. It is abundant life and continual fellowship with Jesus in all one's small affairs and cares.

Love is a science that I am learning to comprehend in this world and will continue studying throughout Eternity. I experience its authority and become convinced that it is strong and limitless. Love is mighty, and this frightens me. Who am I that God should entrust such a weapon to me? Yet He not only entrusts it but teaches me how to wield it. Love is the most powerful force in the entire Universe. It can demolish strongholds and create something new and beautiful within broken hearts, giving peace, joy, and hope for a beautiful future in the company of God Himself. Love must begin in my life at some point so that it may never, never end. And this is real. God teaches it. This is the goal He has appointed for all His children in their spiritual growth. Those who do not have time to attain it before they go to their rest will continue learning throughout Eternity, while we who remain alive still have much to comprehend. Jesus Himself is our Teacher of love, writing this eternal law within the heart.

1. In the light of this lesson, please read 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 1 Thessalonians 4:9; John 7:16-18; and 14:26.
2. Do you know any other Bible verses that correspond to this lesson?
3. What did you understand from this lesson?
4. What revelations did you receive while studying this subject?
5. Does God act directly, teaching each person individually, or does He use His people for this purpose?
6. As you study in this School, do you see the influence of the Holy Spirit upon your heart?
7. Is love a science, a pleasant experience, or something else?

## Lesson 45. What Do You Need?

Sometimes we expect love to mean the absolute acceptance of every person. The impression arises that a loving heart must seize with a death grip everyone who has shown it interest in any way and bind such souls to itself with ties of affection. Love knows how to do this as well; it is strong enough even for this.

Yet in the life of Jesus we find interesting examples in which His conduct and attitude toward people may appear difficult to understand.

When Jesus was baptized and received the gift of the Holy Spirit, He attracted universal attention, but no one followed Him. For forty days afterward, while being tempted by Satan, He remained completely alone in the wilderness. Having gained the victory, Jesus returned to the Jordan, and once again John the Baptist pointed to Him as the Lamb of God. Yet even now the Lord remained alone; no one joined Him. On the following day Christ came to the Jordan once more and was again proclaimed the Messiah. The close attention of the people was fixed upon Jesus, but He withdrew once more in complete solitude. This time, however, two of John's disciples decided to become acquainted with Jesus and followed Him, causing the Lord indescribable joy. Someone had become interested in Him; someone desired to know Him more closely! The heart of Jesus rejoiced. Yet turning to the disciples, He asked a strange question: "What seek ye?" (John 1:38). I do not think these words sounded rude, but they were testing. The Lord desired to know the disciples' true motives. They were firmly determined to become acquainted with Him and were not troubled by such a question. Moreover, the disciples even invited themselves to visit Him. Then Andrew gathered courage and called his brother Simon, whom Jesus immediately received. After this we see that the Savior Himself began inviting disciples to follow Him, and they brought their friends to Him.

We read in Luke 9:57-58: "And it came to pass, that, as they went in the way, a certain man said unto Him, Lord, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest. And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head."

Once again we hear an interesting answer from Christ. He makes the new disciple understand that His Kingdom is of an entirely different Spirit and nature. At the same time, the Savior immediately calls another person who is occupied with the cares of this life. Luke 9:59-60 says: "And He said unto another, Follow Me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God."

Then something entirely difficult to understand occurs. In John chapter 6, we read that when Jesus arrived in Capernaum, He preached a remarkable sermon about His mission and thereby destroyed the vain plans of many disciples. Afterward they united in deciding to leave Him. When the disciples expressed their contempt for Jesus by demonstratively walking away, for some reason He did not try to stop them or ask them to return. Moreover, Jesus turned to the other twelve disciples with the searching question, "Will ye also go away?" thereby placing them before a definite choice. They had to make a decision.

But Peter saved the situation and answered for everyone in John 6:68-69: "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of Eternal life. And we believe and are sure that Thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God."

Once again Jesus says something strange in John 6:70-71: "Jesus answered them, Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil? He spake of Judas Iscariot the son of Simon: for he it was that should betray Him, being one of the twelve."

When the betrayal was destined to take place, Jesus, knowing everything, did not try to persuade Judas to reconsider and refrain from doing it. Instead, He allowed Judas to carry out his intention, saying, "That thou doest, do quickly."

When the rich young ruler was offered the opportunity to become Christ's disciple, the conditions of discipleship were shown to him, and the young man went away sorrowful, Jesus did not attempt to detain him.

I have given these examples to show another side of love in which a person's choice and right to freedom are respected. I imagine the pain of separation Jesus experienced when He saw His disciples departing forever toward certain destruction, knowing that the doors of salvation were closing to them eternally. Yet He did not hinder them. The most frightening thing is that Jesus sometimes asks me this question as well: "What do you need from Me, Andrey?" making me understand that His Kingdom is not of this world. I must give an answer. And I answer as Peter did: "Where can I go, Lord? With Thee are life, love, happiness, and friendship. In the world are vanity, sin, and death. May I continue with Thee?" Jesus embraces me and nods His head, assuring me also of His love.

Jesus addresses this strange question to many people. Unfortunately, they turn away from Him.

I very often decide to love different people. They differ greatly from one another. One rejoices in such treatment and is ready to open the heart. Another turns away and begins to hate me. Although my love proceeds from a pure heart, each person perceives it differently. Love does not mean that I must run after a beloved friend and attempt to prove something until that person believes me and changes their attitude. Instead, I allow the person to relate to me as they consider necessary, respecting their choice.

Love tests the true feelings and motives of friends. It will not quench the smoking flax or break the bruised reed, yet it will withstand open hostility and will not retreat from its principles when faced with rejection.

Jesus continued loving those who betrayed and abandoned Him. It was exceedingly painful for Him to experience the betrayal of His close disciple, yet Christ did not prevent people from choosing their path. Jesus drank this bitter cup of love while

remaining faithful. If any of those who departed had returned to Christ in repentance, they would have been joyfully received and restored.

This approach to human freedom helps me avoid various difficulties and gives the person near me the opportunity to decide independently how to relate to me. I will say honestly that sometimes it is very painful to feel rejected and unwanted when nothing can be done.

From some people it sounds like this: “I need your money, your talents, your body, your connections, your influence, your gifts, or something else that belongs to you—but I do not need you.” From others it sounds this way: “Your place is over there. Take it and do not move.” Love sees all this and gives a person the right to leave.

When you remember how everyone abandoned Christ in His most difficult hour and how He had to drink the cup of suffering in complete solitude, it becomes easier, because you understand that you are no better than the Savior.

The only person who supported Jesus during the darkest moments of His life was an unnamed thief who saw his Savior in Christ and declared his faith in Him. This was all Jesus saw before His death.

Sometimes love leads me through similar darkness, and this condition helps me reconsider many things in life and cast aside what is unnecessary and unstable. What joy it is to understand that someone accepts you, needs you, and treasures you. All these people shine in your life like precious stones, and you value them as the dearest treasure you can take with you to Heaven.

What do you need, my friends, in this School?

1. In the light of this lesson, please read 1 Chronicles 28:9 and John 6:37.
2. What did you understand from this lesson?
3. What revelations did you receive while studying this subject?

4. What other examples from the Bible came to your mind while studying the lesson? Give two of them.
5. When, and to whom, should the question considered in this lesson not be asked?
6. Why does Jesus sometimes ask what I need instead of immediately giving me what I require?
7. Did you notice that in Revelation 3:18 the Lord likewise imposes nothing upon anyone?

## Lesson 46. A Strange Message

There is a very sad and strange message for our time that we carry into this world without embarrassment or thought. We say it to our loved ones, our friends, our coworkers, and everyone we meet along life's path. We hear this message in reply to our proposals and invitations. We have grown so accustomed to it that we do not even consider what we are doing or saying. It can be spoken tenderly, regretfully, or enthusiastically. It is easy to invent different words and expressions for it, as well as many reasons and excuses. Yet however skillfully we disguise this message, to everyone without exception it sounds unmistakably clear and is understood this way: "You do not interest me, and I do not need you!" Of course, it is rarely expressed so plainly, because it seems rude and insulting, especially when spoken by an influential person or someone very close.

I did not previously understand this message of our time until I read the story of a missionary who decided to convert some people to his faith. After many days of unsuccessful preaching, he asked why no one was interested in the truths he proclaimed. He heard this reply: "You say good and correct things, and you wish us well and happiness, but you do not need us." This answer struck me. I began observing what happens in our communication and concluded that we live in a society of people whom no one needs. Sometimes, out of respect or propriety, one may show a little attention to one's neighbors, but this often looks like a favor, and in return the person receives the same condescending treatment on the principle, "You do something for me, and I will do something for you." Saddest of all, this message is heard not only in distant countries and new mission fields, but even within families; it is directed toward those who are very dear to a person.

You may reply that no one speaks to me this way and that I myself never deliver such a message. I agree. Expressed directly, it sounds very harsh and has an extremely destructive

power capable of plunging anyone into deep depression. Therefore, this message has been clothed in very harmless words conveying information about priorities, plans, needs, and cares. It all looks quite pleasant and sometimes even cheerful, yet in the end I still understand that I am not needed. And who am I to be needed by anyone? What is special about me? Perhaps someone will value me when they come to my funeral. Then should I hasten that meeting?

Of course, I have no desire to reduce our entire world and all communication to one common denominator. We are a society that has a goal of moving somewhere and necessarily achieving something, and for this we are ready to sacrifice what is dearest, most precious, and most significant—our friends, loved ones, relatives, and time. Then we wonder why no one needs us either.

When my daughter had just begun school, I noticed that she very often came to me with the request, “Daddy, let’s play!” I always had a whole arsenal of excuses ready, by which I convinced my child that I was too busy to give her time. Years passed, and I saw that this message had taken root and borne bitter fruit. I realized that my daughter no longer needed me either. No matter how I try to break through this wall, it is very high and strong. We communicate, love each other, and visit one another, but as strangers. Something is missing in this relationship. And I know what it is: that very answer I could have given many years ago but was too busy to give.

I do not exclude myself from our society when speaking of this tragedy. I count myself among those who carry such a message. It is very painful for me to recognize this, but I am one of the missionaries of this kind of preaching. Yet I understand what is happening and fight against it. Love helps me greatly in this.

I realized one important thing. If I do not resist, I will drown with everyone else. If we all drift together with the current, someday we will meet a waterfall and fall over it together.

What does this strange message sound like? I will give several common examples: “I have no time,” “I am very busy,” “Another

time," "I cannot get anything done," "Wait; can't you see I cannot?" "I have an important meeting," "It was so nice talking with you. Bye," "How are you? (But please do not give a long answer.)" Of course, I exaggerate a little, and every one of these phrases can be spoken in an ordinary working situation. There is no tragedy in that. But the heart cannot be deceived. It perceives precisely the meaning placed into the words. It does not make a mistake. I think each of you understands your neighbor but is afraid to recognize these phrases in their direct meaning. Even the expression "I love you" may contain this very message. I remember an occasion when my friends used those exact words to ask me not to bother them after I decided to give them my time. I understood everything very quickly.

Undoubtedly, not everything is as tragic as I have portrayed it. The fact that this message is not spoken to me directly gives me hope that I am mistaken when I judge other people's motives by my own standards. Yet the result is obvious: I remain completely alone, and at times the loneliest place turns out to be a gathering of those who believe in the same God and sing the same songs to the glory of God.

We will somehow sort things out with people and settle these questions. But what shall I do about God, Who has time for me, Who seeks me, and Who is ready to serve me twenty-four hours a day—and does so? What will I say to Him in response to all His wishes and proposals? I already have many familiar excuses in my arsenal. Then suddenly I realize that this is wrong, that it should not be this way. I risk becoming unnecessary to God and hearing the sorrowful words that He does not know me. What should I do? How can I change this course of events?

Jesus provides a way out. He offers Himself. He does so very modestly, saying, "I counsel thee to buy of Me . . . Behold, I stand at the door, and knock . . ."

If I answer Jesus that I simply have no time, He will understand what I mean and will not try to persuade me otherwise. After all, He Himself gives me a new day each morning and knows how and with what I occupy myself.

The essence of this strange message is that my priorities are arranged incorrectly. I will always find time for what is important, necessary, and dear to me. For example, not all of us say that we have no time to eat or sleep, or anything of that sort. Sometimes the ordinary desire to relieve oneself becomes the highest priority, and I find time for it while postponing everything else.

But if in my crowded schedule I find no time for friendship with God and a closer acquaintance with Him, then I think it would be right not to search for time, but to set it apart and devote it specifically to this matter.

Love teaches me to value every person and let them feel that I need them and that there is enough of my love for them as well, even if physically I truly do not have enough time for everything. Love seeketh not her own, but gives herself and does not regret it. She loves at all times, and her arsenal contains no “strange message” declaring that she needs no one. Love needs people and desires to fill their lives with herself, making those lives better, more beautiful, and more splendid.

1. Please read Luke 15:4-10; Proverbs 17:17; and Jeremiah 3:1. What do these passages have in common?
2. What did you understand from this lesson?
3. What revelations did you receive while studying this subject?
4. What other Bible verses came to your mind while reading this lesson? Give two of them.
5. How can you let your neighbor know that you need them when you truly do not have enough time to communicate or meet with them?
6. How can I discover whether I truly need anyone?
7. Are you a person who is needed?

## Lesson 47. An Open Heart

I remember how, in our youth, we sometimes played soccer in enclosed courtyards. At times it ended with the ball flying through someone's open window vent, and one of us had to go ask for it back. We were always scolded for playing such games, but the ball was returned. Once I decided to test the strength of my kick in the hope of scoring a goal, but the ball changed its trajectory and flew into a closed window. We heard the sound of breaking glass, and all of us ran away together. But because the ball was very expensive and belonged to someone else, I had to go and ask for it back. I learned many things about myself. The glass had to be replaced at my expense. And I thought that if the window had been open, it would not have broken.

Have you heard expressions such as “a broken heart” or “a shattered soul”? Why are they called that? From my own experience, I know how painful it is when stones are thrown into your heart, breaking it into tiny pieces. Sometimes people apologize afterward and try to glue the fragments together, but the cracks remain.

Yet a miracle took place. Along life's path I met Jesus, and He amazed me with His openness, accessibility, and hospitality. I studied His character and saw a great Heart standing wide open. Stones were thrown into it from every side, yet it neither broke nor closed. It is very much like an open door through which anyone who decides to do so may enter. The Heart of Jesus became accessible for study and knowledge. I entered It. I am in Him. And His great Heart proved to be a boundless ocean of God's love into which stones of sin, hatred, accusation, and mockery are continually cast. The ocean receives them all, calmly opening its waters, swallowing every flying object, sending circles across the surface, and continuing its life undisturbed. For me, the secret of peace and calm was insoluble. I longed to become such an ocean.

All my attempts to love my neighbors ended when we reached the first crossroads of differing opinions, hurled the stones of our ambitions at one another, and together broke each other's hearts. But life taught me to avoid sharp corners and not create situations of conflict. With this outlook on life, I managed to advance very far. Yet I knew that the stones were prepared and would someday fly. Gossip is something a believer cannot escape. Sooner or later I become its victim. My glass cannot withstand such blows; it breaks. Yet I do not want to open the windows of my soul.

But the day came in my life when I grew weary of these beatings and understood that I had many good stones prepared for retaliation, but no love at all—the very love that endureth all things. I turned to God with this confession. I asked Him to give me this power, teach me to love, and change my life. The Lord heard and answered. Something switched within my consciousness, and I understood that I love.

I did not yet understand how it worked, but I saw that this power to love was within me and that it was mighty. This power does not disappear and is always available. I began listening to the new condition of my soul and observing what took place. I tried using this power under different combat conditions and upon different people, and I concluded that love is the most powerful weapon of defense and attack in the entire Universe.

I also noticed that love opened my heart to other hearts. Many people, seeing this openness, throw stones, but they do me no harm, although they could cause pain. I understood that an open heart filled with love is very difficult to break. Like the ocean, it is ready to receive all who desire to enter. And many people, seeing my openness, open themselves in return, and I can calmly give them my love and friendship, of which God has a great abundance.

Friends, I am not calling you to open your hearts indiscriminately to everyone right now, but to allow God's love to perform this work within you.

I will tell you a parable about jars.

Dirty jars with iron lids lived on the shore of the ocean. Their media had warned them that the ocean was dangerous and unpredictable, or that it simply did not exist and all the jars had appeared accidentally in this world as a result of evolution. But among them were those who entered their society and spoke about the beauty of life in the ocean, its warm waters, cleansing abilities, and other advantages. All this sounded like a fairy tale, but the witnesses of the ocean differed from the other jars in their cleanliness and carried within themselves those very waters about which they told their neighbors. Some believed these stories and went to the ocean, immersing themselves in its waters. All the dirt truly washed away from their surfaces. But because the lids of their souls were closed, they could not immerse themselves completely in the clean waters. Thus they were in it, but it was not in them. Their inward dirt was perfectly visible to all the other jars because their outward appearance had been washed. Yet when they returned to the shore, the closed jars became dirty again and were like everyone else.

But one jar, conscious of its inward uncleanness, desired to open its lid and in that condition allow the ocean to wash its interior. A beautiful union resulted: I am in it, it is in me, and its waters abide within me. Hearts were cleansed. Open jars could descend to the very bottom of the ocean, studying its qualities from within. Nothing harmed them, and no one could pluck them from its hand. Purity, peace, and mighty influence became accessible to every open jar. They rejoiced in this condition and went into the world to bear witness to the love of the ocean, that it exists and rewards those who love it. But many did not believe them, and some were struck and broken, their fragments being cast into the ocean. Precious in the sight of the ocean is the death of its jars.

But there were also jars that, after tasting the waters of the ocean, began looking toward the world, reaching for it, entering forbidden territory, contracting forbidden marriages, leaving the warm harbor, or emerging from the clean waters and plunging into the bustle along the shore to satisfy their curiosity.

Usually they did not return, or they crawled back to the shore beaten and dirty. Suffering the pangs of conscience, they were afraid to entrust themselves to the gentle waters of infinite love so that they might be washed and healed.

God's love is like the boundless waters of the world's ocean, and it is ready to receive every tormented soul into its embrace. There is enough of God's love for everyone; it never runs out and never fails. I need only open the windows of my heart, and it will not keep me waiting. With mighty streams of cleansing love, God will change everything in my life. The dream of Jesus will be fulfilled: I will be in Him, He in me, and His words will come alive for me and accomplish everything for which they were spoken. Nothing will be able to separate me from the love of God. I am not afraid of the stones of mockery, gossip, treachery, accusation, or human malice, because the windows of my soul are open, allowing the ocean of God's love to swallow everything directed against me. And I continue to love. Love cannot close its windows; it is love precisely so that it may belong to everyone.

1. Please read Matthew 5:8, 14-16; John 10:7-10; and Luke 4:18, and consider them in the light of this lesson.
2. What did you understand while studying this subject?
3. What revelations did you receive?
4. Do you have examples from your own life showing the advantage of an open and loving soul?
5. Was Jesus open to everyone?
6. What does it mean to open the heart?
7. What Bible verses came to your mind?

## Lesson 48. The Other Side of the Love Languages

A person who understands the love languages must remember that they can bring joy to hearts and ennoble one's neighbor, but at the same time they can become that person's most vulnerable place. A person may perceive everything bad received in their love language many times more sharply and painfully.

The most widespread sin against the commandment "Thou shalt not kill" lies in the fact that words of insult, slander, and abuse contain destructive power. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gave this matter special attention by revealing the spirit of the law. For some people, words of cursing spoken in the heat of the moment pose no problem, yet they kill human friendship, happiness, and love within people. Like fiery darts, they strike and shatter human hearts. After an outburst of emotion comes a calm, and friends try to live in harmony, although the affection of the heart is already gone. Only dry relationships remain. Families fall apart, or their members live under the silent yoke of mere coexistence. But it should not be this way! Forgiveness and repentance help restore communication, but something close and dear dies forever. Is there a solution to this problem? Yes, there is.

Physical assault or the infliction of bodily pain also carries murderous power. And if touch is a person's love language, such actions can destroy the soul far more severely and break the tender heart forever. In their helplessness, victims of violence sometimes have nowhere to turn, and they live in fear of the next assault. Who will save them from this nightmare? Yet there is a way out.

When I had just turned to God, I began looking for like-minded people who could tell me about the beauty of life with the Lord. After finding God's church, I attended a meeting and was invited to someone's home. We became pleasantly acquainted, enjoyed a delicious meal, and I was asked many questions. I

told them everything about myself without hiding anything. After some time, I learned that the whole church knew what I had spoken about, but in a distorted form. Many had formed a prejudiced opinion of me that they could not change afterward, even through personal communication. I completely lost the desire to visit such people or invite them to my home. I did not wish to give that which is holy to those who did not value it. I had to be selective in hospitality.

If I cause harm through my deeds, doing what appears right from my own point of view, then to people who speak the language of acts of service, my actions look like a great insult. For example, while visiting someone, try having everyone refuse the meal that was prepared and ask for canned food instead. I am certain that any hostess would be disappointed. Or if you walk across a clean floor in dirty boots, this will be regarded as the highest form of insult, for which the retribution will be severe. Yet there is a way out.

If I give a neighbor whose language is gifts all kinds of rubbish merely to dispose of things I do not need, I risk losing a friend, because this causes deep pain. Out of politeness, the person may feel unable to refuse the gift, yet be ashamed to throw it away. Or if I break or lose things my neighbor entrusted to me as something precious to them, I may thereby inflict a deep wound upon their heart. But here too there is a way out and a solution to the problem.

And when I have no time for someone whose love language is quality time, and I tell them this openly, they hear these words: "I do not need you, and you do not interest me!!!" They perceive this ten times more painfully than others. One should not be surprised afterward if the relationship is destroyed. Yet a solution can be found here as well.

Once, while speaking with a friend, I talked as usual about my love, joy, and other beautiful things. He looked at me sorrowfully and wanted money from me. At that moment I simply had none, but he did not know this. I cannot read minds, and I did not know about his need. Yet my friend was deeply offended that I had not helped him in a difficult hour, and he

stopped communicating with me without explaining why. I am very sorry this happened. I learned something. But the friend is gone.

We all make mistakes and sometimes fall in our dealings with other people. Without thinking, we wound one another. What should we do about this? How can we go on living?

Love provides a way out and an answer to these questions. She teaches me tact, respect, honor, foresight, tenderness, and prudence. She senses the situation and watches over my actions, adorning each of them and softening my careless deeds. Love likes to apologize even when she is not at fault, if only to smooth the situation and remove tension from the relationship. She seeks every opportunity to make her neighbor happy. Love devises new methods for exerting a good influence and is not afraid to reveal herself.

Love closes my ears when I hear curses in the language dearest to my heart, forgives the offender, and prays for that person, asking God to bless them and remove the desire for revenge. Love securely preserves my heart from destruction, immersing it in the deepest part of her ocean, where it becomes unreachable by the enemy's fiery darts and continues to love and plan good things.

Love lives surrounded by evil but has no relationship with it. God preserves every loving soul from the power of sin.

Love raises a person above problems and cares, teaching them to love their neighbors in a language those neighbors understand and to place all their strength into it.

Love loves at all times and never fails. If it suddenly disappeared, then it was not love, but a crude counterfeit.

Once love enters my life, she is always available to me.

This is how love resolves all my problems and cares, bringing me joy at all times. Let us therefore love one another, for in this way we shall fulfill the law of Christ.

1. Please read Romans 12:9-11 and Galatians 5:14-23, and consider them in the light of this lesson.

2. What did you understand while studying this subject?
3. What revelations did you receive?
4. Do you have examples from your own life of choosing the best solution in similar conflicts? Please share them.
5. Do you believe that love protects the heart from the attacks of one's neighbors?
6. What Bible verses came to your mind? Give two of them.
7. Do you believe that love is available to you as well?

## Lesson 49. Heavenly Relationships

As children grow older, they have many questions about starting a family and the birth of a child. They are very curious in this regard. One way or another, children somehow obtain the necessary information, and the older they become, the better they understand what takes place between a husband and wife and how a child comes into the world. In the past, people learned about this only from someone's words or from books; now it can be seen in every detail. Unfortunately, the enemy of the human soul attempts to distort such knowledge and plunge people into an abyss of passion and lust, perverting the pure attraction of a man toward a woman and vice versa. Satan seeks to drag it through the mire of extramarital relations.

But let us examine the proper situation.

As they learn about our world, young people acquire many good things. Somewhere deep within, they dream of finding their other half and establishing a Christian family. Young men and women begin studying this subject, seeing the example of their parents and observing other families. Without practical experience or knowledge of the depth of family relationships, but imagining them in their own way, young people begin preparing for marriage. Some are frightened by it. Others are drawn toward the opposite sex. Yet their knowledge remains at the level of theory and dreams. Many years of waiting pass in this way. Friends establish families, have children, and share the joys and sorrows of married life, while you have only theory and no understanding of what such a way of life looks like from within.

Then the answer to your prayers and expectations arrives: the Lord presents you with the long-awaited gift, and your heart becomes completely attached to that person. All your thoughts and feelings are directed toward the candidate for your other half. The novelty of the relationship makes your head spin, and

in prayers of thanksgiving and blessing you soar toward Heaven. A season of fasting and prayer begins as you desire to understand whether this is the right person. Yet you still have no practical knowledge of how a family works. You know that this will come after the wedding and for now simply believe that everything will be wonderful. In your imagination, the “honeymoon” appears very sweet indeed. But all this is only words and fantasies. From the object of your love, you can receive nothing except conversation and charming smiles.

Then the moment comes when the wedding date has been set, the time agreed upon, the celebration arranged, and the guests invited. Everyone waits with eager anticipation. The bridegroom and bride come forward and, before many witnesses, promise to care for one another through the various circumstances of life and to love each other until death separates them. God joins this new family, and you are declared husband and wife. At that moment, you understand that you possess every right to your other half and that your family life has now begun.

The marriage ceremony, celebration, gifts, and congratulations all fade before the moment when the two of you remain alone to know one another. Theory becomes practice. You enter the world of family relationships and begin seeing it from within, now possessing your own personal experience, feelings, and emotions. You no longer need to search for someone, because you have a friend who will gladly meet all your physical and emotional needs. The intimacy of this relationship becomes yours forever. By mutual consent, you unite in one another’s embrace and receive everything that rightfully belongs to you two alone.

The chief purpose of your family is not the fulfillment of shared plans, the building of a home, or the birth of children, but knowing one another throughout your entire lives amid all life’s difficulties and joys. When the proper course is set toward achieving this very purpose, everything else becomes an auxiliary and accompanying factor in your growth in knowing one another. Any other goal removes the foundation of the

relationship and builds upon an incomprehensible foundation. And the winds blew, and the waters rose, and that house . . . Write the rest yourselves.

Let us transfer this model of relationships to the spiritual life.

I hear much about agape love and read much about it, studying the subject and trying to understand what it looks like from within. What does a person who possesses it experience? What thoughts and feelings fill that person? The more I learn about the beauty of such relationships, the more I desire to possess them. My whole nature reaches toward God, my entire being thirsts for the knowledge of the Eternal, and my soul languishes in expectation of that very love which endureth all things and never fails. I know where and by whom it is written about; I know people who speak about such love. But I want to know it from within and personally taste all its fullness so that I may always have access to it. Yet I cannot receive it casually, outside marriage to the One Who is Love. I must enter a lawful relationship, giving my entire self in exchange for Christ. Jesus does not merely desire to present me with Heavenly merchandise; in this symbol, He longs to give me Himself as well. Without embarrassment, the Word of God calls those who receive this gift the Bride of Christ, pointing to the intimacy of the relationship between them and Jesus.

There will be no divorces in Heaven. As a consequence of this relationship, I receive that very Heavenly love which unites me so closely with the Heavenly Friend of my soul, my dear Jesus, and makes our relationship so intimate and strong that nothing can separate us. I unite with Jesus; I am in Him, and His love is in me. The purpose of our union becomes knowing one another more deeply. Through this knowledge, I better understand the character of our Heavenly Father, Who also blesses our union.

I love, and this condition of soul is now always available to me. At any time I may approach this source of inspiration, and I need not seek anything elsewhere. Love becomes my eternal possession. In her manifestation toward my neighbors, I see the manifestation of God's love toward people. From now on, I understand all the actions and directions of God described in

the Book of books. I comprehend the chief motive in all the works of the King of the Universe—love. And this love is available to me in all its fullness. At the same time, I remain an ordinary person immersed in my cares and thoughts, struggling for survival upon our restless Earth. Yet my inward world reaches toward Heaven, and only in Heavenly fellowship do I find peace and satisfaction.

The joy of intimacy with Christ becomes my continual possession and brings happiness into my life, along with a deep desire to know Jesus still more fully.

I now know from within what agape love is and how great and boundless it is. My human mind, damaged by sin, is being healed, although it retains scars and memories of past mistakes. I study love within myself, testing it in different directions, and I am amazed by its greatness and power. It is the mightiest weapon in the entire Universe, placed within the earthen vessel of my soul so that its power may be attributed not to me, but to the One from Whom it proceeds.

I love. This is victory; this is the very best acquisition. This is knowing the only true God, and Jesus Christ, Whom He hath sent. This is life more abundantly. And it is available to everyone whose soul thirsts for such a relationship and strives toward it.

I build my house upon a rock. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock.

1. Read Isaiah 54:5; 62:5; Matthew 25:10; and John 3:28-30 in the light of this lesson.
2. What did you understand from this lesson?
3. What revelations did you receive?
4. Does this School deepen your knowledge of God's love?
5. Who is the Bride of Christ? What does this mean to you?
6. What does it mean to know God?
7. Why does the Lord desire to be our Husband? Isaiah 54:5.

## Lesson 50. Love Is . . .

Love is the most beautiful, necessary, and joyful thing in the life of every person. We were created by Love for love.

Love is the single pulse of the Universe, which was conceived and created by God to bear witness throughout Eternity to the love of the Creator. And according to His design, I am part of this great organism.

Love conceived our world and created it. She placed all Her talent and creative power into every speck of dust, filling the visible world with a diversity of colors and sounds.

Love is the law of life and life itself. Without her, everything begins to wither and die. Sin introduced its own changes into the laws of existence and brought death. But Love conquered death and tore out its sting, appointing a time when everything unclean and evil will be completely destroyed by cleansing fire. And that day is approaching.

Love is wisdom and creative power that produces what is beautiful and wonderful. She is an unpredictable imagination capable of devising new projects for the joy and happiness of others. Love continually gives birth to new ideas so that through them she may reveal her beauty and attractiveness to the world. She is diverse in her manifestations.

Love is the character of God expressed and revealed in nature, in the law, in the Bible, and in the life of Jesus Christ. Her purpose is to reveal herself and be reflected in the actions and way of thinking of righteous people. Love forms the character of the person who receives her into the likeness of the One from Whom she proceeds.

Love is a lifelong test. She mercilessly points out sin and wages war against it on every front, conquering every evil and impurity. Love is the victor's banner beneath which all God's faithful children gather to win battles and conquer new territories, establishing God's principles and standards of life.

Love is the mightiest power in the Universe, capable of destroying every evil, demolishing ungodly thoughts, and bringing stony hearts to life. She is strong where she is received and where she rules. Yet love also treats the choice of every person with respect, allowing each one to live as they determine for themselves. Love respects and safeguards personal freedom even when a person has chosen an evil path.

Love is my personal choice of the path of life that God Himself has offered me. By choosing love, I give God authority to change my life and restore it according to His plans and standards. Love accomplishes this beautifully, confidently producing within me what God desires to see. She applies all her creative power to restoring a pure and holy character within me. And she succeeds if I do not depart from the right path.

Love is the life of God within me. She is that invisible bond between our souls which unites our hearts so that we may know one another more deeply and, through that knowledge, enjoy the most trusting and intimate relationship.

Love is God's plan for the future of the entire Universe. She will completely destroy sin from every corner of it. She will cleanse the consciousness of all Heavenly beings and bring all God's creation to one Divine standard called: love one another and serve one another. This will be the most joyful occupation throughout all the ages of endless Eternity.

Love is the eternal condition of a living organism. She does not disappear with the years or wither with time, but always remains fresh, strong, and ready for new victories and conquests.

Love is life more abundantly. She begins upon this Earth, but her prospect extends into endless Eternity so that there in the distant future she may remain as fresh and beautiful as she was at the very beginning of my journey.

Love is an unearthly beauty capable of transforming any person, any appearance, and any image into a masterpiece. Wherever she places her seal, everything becomes amazingly

wonderful and beautiful. She is the touch of God's Hand that adorns every appearance and every deed. Love will never repel anyone or turn anyone away by her outward appearance, for she is modest, pure, attractive, and full of good works.

Love is a magnet that draws to herself every intelligent, thirsty, and seeking soul. She draws people toward the inexhaustible springs of her generosity, giving life, meaning, and hope for something better and more beautiful.

Love is a mystery to the soul that can be solved only by one who immerses themselves in her and sees her from within.

Love is an ocean of new possibilities, new technologies, and new prospects for structuring human life and activity. She is available in every sphere and finds application everywhere.

Love is a ship whose Captain is the Lord Jesus. This ship will bring me into the quiet harbor of Eternity, overcoming every storm and tempest of human passion.

Love is sorrow and sighing over all the abominations taking place among my people, of whom I too am a part.

Love is that very place within my consciousness upon which God will soon place His seal, making it my special mark distinguishing me from a perishing world.

Love is the power to love when darkness, unbelief, sorrow, crisis, and chaos are all around.

Yet despite all her boundless power, love remains a very tender plant that needs careful tending and nourishment from me. She is ready to withstand every external attack and trial and will not be broken by any storm or hurricane from without. Yet within me she remains the most fragile plant, requiring continual care and gentle treatment. Love cannot endure the cold of selfishness or dalliance with sin within my heart. She will not accompany me into forbidden territory, for there she could die. She will await my decision to nourish her from the living fountain of God's grace and will draw her strength from the ocean of God's love. It will always remain a mystery to me that Almighty God has limited His infinite power within me by my

choice. Without Him I can do nothing, and without me He will accomplish nothing within me. But our mutual love solves this problem very simply, and love quickly blossoms in all her beauty and majesty.

Love is a tiny seed that, upon falling into the good soil of my heart, grows and becomes a great tree bearing its fruit in its season. Beneath the shade of its leaves, this tree gathers weary travelers and friends to give them rest and renew their strength. She protects tormented souls from the scorching heat and carries within herself God's blessing, which maketh rich and addeth no sorrow with it.

God is Love, and he who abides in love abides in God. Such is the law of Eternal life. This is how it works.

Love is a path that you, my friend, may choose and walk together with God, writing your own love story upon your heart.

Love is . . .

1. Please read Song of Solomon 8:6-7 and 2:4.
2. Please share your revelations about love.
3. What did you understand from this lesson?
4. Is it interesting to you to complete these assignments?
5. Does the prospect of learning to love and living by love frighten you?
6. Do you understand that love is an endless science with eternal consequences?
7. What other Bible verses came to your mind?

To be continued.