

Relationships before Marriage (Volume 1)

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Relationships before Marriage

Dear Friends,

The book ***“Relationships Before Marriage”*** is a practical guide based on biblical principles and the personal experiences of the author. It encourages the reader to reflect on the fact that a happy family is not a matter of chance, but the result of conscious choices and the observance of certain laws. The author shares wisdom on how to build relationships on a solid foundation, distinguish true love from infatuation, and avoid common mistakes inspired by worldly ideas of happiness. This book will become an indispensable companion for those preparing for marriage, seeking their life partner, or wishing to strengthen existing relationships.

In addition to this book, many other thematic books have been created in the light of Agape love.

A book series titled "Happy Family":

- Volume 1: Relationships before Marriage
- Volume 2: Honeymoon Year
- Volume 3: Family Matters
- Volume 4: Parents from God
- Volume 5: Raising Children for God
- Volume 6: Beloved Teenagers

Here is a list of some of them: · Message for Laodicea · Happiness · Friendship · Love · What I Believe (28 points of faith of our congregation in the light of love) · In the School of God's Love

All books are based on materials from the "School of Agape Love"

You can find all my books free of charge on my website:
www.karpekin.de

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What We Have Come To?

Our earthly life is conditioned by the fact that we, men and women, were created for each other. The difference in our worldviews does not divide us, but rather attracts us. An attraction to the opposite sex was embedded in our minds, and this feature has been preserved to this day.

When it comes to love, many immediately perceive it as the infatuation of a man and woman with each other with all the ensuing consequences. We deliberately avoided this side of life in order to carefully examine and understand the foundation of love, its principles and laws of interaction with the surrounding world. All of this was necessary in order to learn to distinguish the eternal from the earthly, the temporary from the unconditional. Such knowledge laid a solid foundation in our consciousness, upon which happiness, love and friendship with all people can be built. This is what we were called for, so that, believing in Jesus, we could be guided in our lives by those principles which our Savior adhered to until His death.

Creating a family without understanding the laws of love, guided only by intuition and knowledge from modern films, is a very risky undertaking.

Preserving already created relationships without love in one's mind is even more difficult. And restoring destroyed connections without knowing what love is and how it works is pure fantasy.

Unfortunately, the statistics of divorces and destroyed relationships in families among believers differ almost nothing from what is happening in the world, and this is a sign of the last times, which we need to take into account in order to know how not to become part of these statistics.

The time to love has come. It came long ago, but when I am armed with knowledge, it becomes clearer to me what to do and how to behave, what I need to refrain from, and what is worth practicing in moderation.

When I tell a person of the opposite sex that I love them, I understand what is being discussed and what I put into this expression, but at the same time I realize that this person understands me according to their level of education in the science of love and hears exactly what they are capable of hearing at their level.

I can also hear words of love addressed to me and understand perfectly well what kind of love is being discussed, and, being a married person, I delicately redirect everything into the right channel, without pushing away the interlocutor, but also without giving reason for sinful thoughts.

God has called us to love one another, and He is pleased to see His love in our relationships. Friends who love each other can accomplish much more in the right spirit, because they are bound by the closest bonds of love and friendship.

Creating a family is the most responsible undertaking that has ever been entrusted to man, and which should be approached very seriously. In this science there are its own laws, its own peculiarities and principles that must be taken into account.

If you take any profession and find a specialist in it, you can immediately determine that before becoming a professional, they studied for several years, had extensive practical experience honing their skills and knowledge, understand where and what mistakes occur, and know how to quickly restore what shows signs of malfunction. And we agree that such people are in their right place and are worthy of engaging in and managing the work entrusted to them.

But if you look at how families are created, you want to cry at how hastily this is done.

When I was doing military service, my appearance inspired confidence in me among the officers, and I was appointed to responsible command positions, but I simply didn't know what to do with it and how to cope with the trust shown. As a result, my army career led me from being deputy platoon commander to being gradually demoted to the rank of private with a sergeant's title. A better position is impossible to imagine.

You're not bothered like a sergeant, and there's no responsibility, like a simple soldier. By the end of my service I had learned something after all, but no one wanted to entrust me with anything anymore.

The Army of Christ, although it has its own charter and laws, is still very similar in some principles of internal structure to worldly enterprises.

Observing people, I identified for myself two types of the most destructive catastrophes in human life. The first is when a person turns their back on Golgotha and refuses to accept the offered salvation. The second is when a hasty family is created, which also quickly begins to collapse. An unsuccessful marriage is not an accident, but a very natural result of hastily made decisions.

If in the first catastrophe nothing can be fixed, and there is no other name under Heaven by which we should be saved, then in the second catastrophe there are still chances to change something and build something solid, although scars and painful memories may remain forever. And if children have appeared, then any breakup not only ruins your life, but also harms those who do not understand everything that is happening and do not know how to live on.

Love knows how to restore ruins. It is always worth remembering that for God there is nothing too difficult that He could not figure out. He is able to help solve any problem in the best way.

Studying love, we have approached the most important topic: "Family Relationships," which I suggest we dive into headfirst, applying all available knowledge about love, happiness and friendship. Let us learn this art of life.

I myself have been in my first marriage for more than 30 years with a wife who is 10 years older than me and married for the second time. I have a daughter and two granddaughters. More than 13 years ago I came to know the power of God's agape love, which taught me much, which I now share with you.

If you already have a family, or had one, or it is falling apart, or you are planning to create one, or are just dreaming about it, then I think that additional knowledge about family matters in the light of agape love will not be superfluous and will help you understand yourself and restore what was destroyed, or build what was missed.

Welcome to the new class of learning. I think that our flight will be pleasant for everyone and will bring much benefit and happiness.

It is never too late to learn to love. Bringing all your plans and relationships to love and friendship is the best undertaking. Bringing love into any sphere of your life is the most blessed decision that will have absolute success with eternal consequences.

There is nothing more joyful than having a life companion with whom you can plan and carry out everything that comes to mind. There is nothing more interesting than planning the happiness of your other half and seeing how they accept it and rejoice, trying to respond in kind.

No matter how much family relationships are criticized and attempts are made to pervert them, the family will always be that cell of society in which the success and welfare of any state is embedded.

The family and the Sabbath are two institutions that were taken by sinful man from Eden. Therefore, the enemy of the soul attacks them most of all. But we are at war not to lose and surrender positions, giving Satan what does not belong to him.

The family is a union that we, together with our character, will be able to take to Heaven, so it is worth investing all our means and strength in the development and improvement of this enterprise according to God's standards.

Questions for Reflection on This Chapter

1. Please read: Prov. 18:22; 1 Pet. 1:22; Gen. 1:26-28; 2:18,22; 3:20; 7:1,7,16; Col. 3:23-25; Prov. 18:24; 31:8; Eccl. 7:8-22; 1 Cor. 13:1-3 in light of this topic.

2. What did you understand from this topic?
3. What status are you currently in?
4. What are families for?
5. What relationship does love have to family matters?
6. Thanks to whom did you come into the world?
7. Do you think having a happy family is an accident or a pattern?
8. If you bring all the laws of love, happiness and friendship into family relationships, what will come of it?
9. Is it important in a family to remain a loving friend, despite all controversial moments?
10. Do you know families where spouses live in perfect harmony? If yes, please share what such relationships are based on?
11. Do you believe that love through you can restore and correct much not only in your family, but also in other families?
12. Do you think you can learn to love those who do not particularly spoil you with their love?
13. Do you think those lessons of love and friendship that we have already considered earlier will be able to work for building family happiness?
14. What should I do if all my attempts to create love in my surroundings run into a wall of misunderstanding?
15. Are you interested in continuing with us?

A Happy Family Is Not a Lottery

When I became a teenager, I dreamed very much of a big win. At that time, games of "Sportloto, 5 out of 36" were practiced, where the main prize was 10 thousand rubles with an average salary of 150 rubles, at an exchange rate of 60 kopecks per dollar and a bread price of 14 kopecks per loaf. I dreamed of quick riches and constantly planned how I would spend this money. But the problem was that I spent my savings without winning anything. My gambler friends were smarter than me and made up whole schemes for placing crosses, by which they were guaranteed to win. But they spent even more money on buying lottery tickets.

At some point in time, it became clear to me that the probability of winning was very small, and the probability of becoming destitute was quite high, so I stopped playing.

The older I got, the larger the main prizes in the lottery became, and there were always those who got them. But I no longer fell for such bait and never spent my money on such things.

Having become a believer, I understood that lottery games are Satan's territory, on which he invites people to sign his documents, giving him the right to keep the souls of subscribers in gambling addiction, deciding who to give the winnings to and who to constantly ruin. If a person cannot write, they are asked to draw a cross instead of a signature, and this is also considered their written consent.

I live in a world that consists of families. As I grew up, thoughts about creating my own family began to come to me. I was ready to get married even in kindergarten, and in my school years I saw a potential wife in every girl I liked, but I was very shy, so I remained lonely for a long time. As a teenager, I already began to seriously think about my family, not even understanding what it was, having in my home the example of quarreling parents. From films I understood that my future wife should be pretty and smile beautifully at me. And later films appeared

that taught me that you can avoid marriage and live with whomever you want, without any obligations.

But I still got married. And I met my future wife at the railway station in Zagreb. She didn't smile at me at all and looked very tired. I didn't even imagine that this was the person with whom I would spend the rest of my life.

Observing how families are created, I have not seen a single sad wedding. I still enjoy looking at newlyweds and rejoicing in their happiness. But I noticed that over time this happiness evaporates somewhere, and people plunge into the daily routine of problems and worries, and many men and women become nervous and militant about anything. You rarely see happy families. At best, they will show you a beautiful facade, although in their hearts people carry bitter disappointment.

When my daughter was growing up, she came to the conclusion that she would never get married. To my question "Why?" she answered that she didn't want to be the twentieth sexual partner. And this was the opinion of a schoolgirl.

It seems that when choosing a family for themselves, people buy a lucky ticket in life, without even thinking about the probability of winning. But unlike chance, happiness has its own laws, under which it necessarily appears where these laws are studied, practiced and followed.

Happiness is not a blue bird of luck, which is very difficult to catch, and then it constantly tries to fly out of the cage. Happiness is more like a puppy that, having accepted you as its owner, remains faithful to you for the rest of its life, not intending to leave you.

Family happiness is not sold at a kiosk and does not come by chance. It must be studied and built, understanding what you are dealing with and how it works.

Once I have learned the language of the country to which I moved to live, I will never forget it if I constantly communicate in it. It will become my way of thinking. Happiness is worth studying, it should be spoken in, it should be thought in. It must

become part of me. Then I will be able to distinguish familiar speech in the noise of different voices and gravitate toward those whom I understand and who do not mind communicating with me. If the vocabulary of my interlocutor is limited to standard phrases for making acquaintances, then at some point we come to a language barrier that we can no longer overcome together, and parting becomes necessary or very desirable. You don't really want to waste time on a foreigner, because life passes, and you have no one to talk to.

The Lord gives us absolute freedom in choosing our other half. Initially, He conceived and arranged us so that we would seek each other, and having found each other, would unite in families and be in union for the rest of our lives, eternal life. But sin separated us from the Creator and decided to separate us from each other. When a family collapses, there are no winners in it, everyone suffers. A family is not a union for a couple of years while everything is good, but an enterprise for life. Divorce is a consequence of sin that breaks hearts and lives, and love and happiness is keeping the law. There is no chance in love, and happiness does not just come. Even if I meet the happiest person and decide to create my own happiness on someone else's happiness, I risk building nothing and destroying what another has built.

When I am erecting the walls of a new house, I sometimes think about how this structure would look if a life companion followed me with a sledgehammer and destroyed everything that I persistently create? And if the two of us built only to then break it down together, what would our future home look like? I know very many people who live in dilapidated huts and don't even imagine that you can live differently. And happiness is always nearby. Like a homeless puppy, it tries to get under my feet to find comfort in my care for it, so that later it will be devoted to me all my life.

In the lottery there are lucky ones who appear after each drawing. They love to advertise them, wanting to show how happy they are now because they made a wise decision and bought a lottery ticket. Now they are rich and have everything.

And foolish viewers watch this and believe that they will be next. Satan rejoices.

I also found lucky ones in family happiness who, having met each other, went, registered, and live their whole lives happily "soul to soul." I do not deny such coincidences. Their joyful union is visible to the whole world. But to be foolish, thinking that I will also be lucky with a probability of one in a billion, I don't really want.

The laws of happy family life are such that if you learn them and follow them, the probability of failure is minimized, and happiness is guaranteed. I risk remaining lonely without ever meeting such a happy person studying the laws of family happiness, but this will not bring me unhappiness.

Happy people, like flower nectar, attract everyone. And there is a danger that an undesirable spirit will be attracted, but love knows how to recognize this and separate flies from bees, feeding all who wish, but attaching itself to its own kind.

Learning happiness is not difficult, but it is necessary to invest your precious time in it and choose a pure source.

Questions for Reflection on This Chapter

1. Please read: Rom. 5:4-5; Ps. 101:7-8; Prov. 8:16-21,35-36; 21:16; 28:19; 31:30; Eccl. 4:9-12; 9:11; Gen. 6:2; Amos 3:3,7; Matt. 7:24-27; John 17:26; 1 Cor. 6:14; Gal. 5:13 in light of this topic.
2. What did you understand from this topic?
3. What do you think is the percentage of luck in probability theory when choosing a life partner?
4. Are all beautiful and attractive people kind and wise people capable of blessing and adorning your life? Justify your answer.
5. Will I have any chances of creating a happy family if I first study the principles of happy family life and seek wisdom from God in this matter?
6. How important is it to have a happy marriage? Maybe it's enough not to be alone and to have children at home?

7. What do you think happens in the hearts of spouses when they decide to build family happiness and do everything possible for this?
8. What advantage does a happy family have over a militant family union?
9. Is a happy union an accident?
10. Is it possible to predict the development of relationships between people wishing to enter into marriage? If yes, by what criteria can their future fate be determined?
11. Does happiness have a pattern?
12. What should I do if my marriage turned out to be unsuccessful? Who should be blamed, and how should I live on?
13. Do you think that knowledge about love, friendship and happiness presented in our School will help build something beautiful and restore what has been destroyed?
14. Where does happiness begin?
15. Do you want to be a happy spouse? If yes, what is necessary to do for this?

The Main Thing Should Be Main

What is more important: to create a family or to preserve it? Without the first there cannot be the second, and without the second there is no point in the first.

It is important to understand what a family is before creating it. And if a family already exists, then it is necessary to understand what it was created for.

Whatever happens in my life, I remain in Heaven's eyes that very person for whose salvation the Heavenly Father gave His beloved Son, so that I would not perish but have Eternal life.

My faith in God and my personal knowledge of the Father and Son are the most important enterprise in my life. These relationships lay the most solid foundation for all subsequent structures, and I carry this union in my heart and take it with me into any sphere of my life and being.

Before I create an earthly family, I need to become a member of the Heavenly family. If I already have a family that was created before my acquaintance with Christ, then upon the conclusion of my union with the Lord it automatically passes with me under God's care and becomes God's property.

God attracts me to Jesus in any status, and He is ready to make of me, whoever I am, what He wants to see. Without God in the heart it is impossible to build something right and lasting. If in my life there is no foundation, which should be Christ, then everything I decide to create, preserve or build will turn out to be a house on sand. The appearance of such a construction will not differ from solid structures, but any test of faith will destroy everything that does not have a reliable foundation.

A family is a union for life. And even if it was created incorrectly in violation of all God's laws, the Lord can restore this enterprise on Himself and establish it in truth and love, if at least one of the two people decides to dedicate their life to God.

When I was a child, every summer my parents took me on vacation to my grandmother in the village. She lived in a small house with one room. This house had no foundation, and the wooden walls stood on simple stones, which threatened to flood the small earthen cellar under the floor where potatoes were stored in case of heavy rains. But my father hired people who, having raised the walls of the house with a jack, poured a solid foundation under it and connected the walls to the foundation. The appearance of the structure did not change, but everyone felt more at ease living in this house from the awareness that it now stood firmly and was protected from rotting and accidental destruction.

The Lord knows how to strengthen everything shaky and flimsy. And even if you entrust Him with a smoking flax, He will not extinguish it, and a bruised reed He will not break.

My friend bought himself a house with a barn, and asks me what is better—tear down the old barn and build a new one in its place or repair the old one. I say that the repair will cost more than a new structure, but they may not give permission to erect the same barn because its dimensions exceed the permissible standards.

A family is not a barn that can be demolished and something better created in its place. A family is a union for life, until death do us part. Creating a wife for Adam, the Lord united these people for all Eternity. God's plans did not include building something temporary that could later be replaced with something better. Family is forever.

But man sinned, and in our days the status of the family has been reduced to the level of an old-fashioned tradition that can be avoided, living in temporary shelters or building houses, changing them like gloves. And at the same time everyone dreams of happiness, which simply cannot be where sin reigns. Happiness begins in my mind, and my mind must have a solid foundation, which can only be given by faith in God, knowledge of His laws and obedience to these truths.

If I decide to create a happy family, but at the same time want to create another extramarital union to make someone else happy, what kind of happiness will I build? The lust of the flesh, although it brings temporary pleasure, has nothing to do with true happiness. No matter how beautiful the lawn behind my fence, it also needs to be mowed.

No matter how dilapidated my family may be, God knows how to restore ruins. His love lays a solid foundation in any relationship and heals any wounds. But think for yourself, if you don't have a family yet, what is better: to build something solid, beautiful and wonderful to enjoy it all your life, or to grab the first thing that comes along, knowing that if necessary it can be repaired or replaced with another? The conclusion is obvious, but reality is sometimes not so.

You can build on Christ and then let another spirit into your life. Nothing good will come of that either. But still, knowing Christ, I have much greater chances that if I rush or make a mistake in something, He will be able to correct it and turn it to good.

My relationship with Christ must remain primary in any status of mine. With Him I can do everything, and without Him even everything will bring me no benefit.

One should not replace the main with the important, but it is necessary to establish what is a priority for me, and always have this at the foundation of any relationship. In my schedule there will always be important things, for the sake of which I will postpone everything that is not so essential. But the main thing should remain main and be my ultimate goal, which I need to achieve.

My main thing may differ from yours, and your main thing may even be unimportant to me. But in a family it is worth having one common goal that can be achieved together, otherwise you will have to go alone all your life in marriage. But this is not a problem if my main thing always remains main in my priorities.

But the problem may be that I don't know what is main for me, because all the important things take up all my time from

morning to evening. How can I figure out myself? I cannot understand this myself, but God can do everything. He gently invites me to stop and know Him. Only He will give me a future and hope.

There can be no happiness outside of God. And even if I manage to build for myself a happy earthly life according to my concepts and remain in it until my death, but harm my soul, what benefit is there to me from this?

Family happiness can be where both spouses want to build it and do something for this, even without knowing God. But it will necessarily come into the life of those who have understood what should be main in life and have made this Main thing main.

God does not hide His laws of happiness, but neither does He hand them over to those who go through life frivolously. In building my happiness, my hands and my will must be involved, then my mind will accept this as an inevitable consequence of my searches and labors. And He who has become Main in my life will apply His hand and bless all my labors and searches, infinitely multiplying the fruit of my choice.

God's goal is that we all be happy in Him. He does everything for this that I allow Him. And if our goals coincide, then I risk becoming the happiest person already in this life and then for all Eternity to languish from happiness, making everyone around me happy.

If the important takes the place of the main, then my family will immediately notice this and will suffer together with me.

Questions for Reflection on This Chapter

1. Please read: John 17:3; Prov. 4:7; Heb. 8:1; Ps. 89:10-12; Acts 6:1-3; Mark 8:36; Neh. 6:2-4; Luke 12:15-21; 21:2-4; Matt. 16:24-28; Eccl. 5:12-16; John 10:3,4,7-11; Titus 1:15-16; 1 Cor. 7:32-35; 13:1-3; Rev. 2:4,14 in light of this topic.
2. What did you understand from this topic?
3. What is main in your life?

4. How does the main differ from the important? Which of these should be first?
5. Can my "main" not correspond to God's expectation?
6. Are you sure that what you called your "main" is actually main for you?
7. If I ask God to show me what is in first place for me and what should be main, will He answer such a prayer?
8. Why is it so important that the "main" be my main and occupy the main place in my life?
9. What should I do if I am all in deeds and don't know what is main in my life and what my goal is? Ps. 45:11; Jer. 6:16.
10. Can the "main" of the other half differ from yours? Will this be a problem for your friendship?
11. Does following the "main" imply a change in my thinking? Mark 7:6-7.
12. Is it worth postponing all important things for the sake of the "main" and doing nothing else?
13. Do these lessons help to set priorities in your life?
14. What should I do if I realize that I am going in the wrong direction?
15. Is it worth making sure that my "main" direction of life has God's approval and blessing?

What Is a Family?

Before creating a family, I think it is worth figuring out what kind of union this is? And if a family already exists, it is necessary to understand what it is in general understanding and in God's design. When there is an idea of what it should be, then you can already plan the construction.

When money appears that is sufficient for building a new house, I do not come to builders with a request to construct something for me. They need a plan. Having experience in this area, they can build anything, but still they will want to know my taste and my preferences, so as not to have problems with the delivery of the object in the future.

If I start building something myself without knowing the laws of this process, then it can be said with confidence that mistakes are inevitable, and some details of the building may pose a mortal danger not only to me, but also to visitors of my house or random passers-by.

A family is a voluntary union of a man and woman, connecting them to each other in marriage. The marriage union is the basic foundation of the life activity of any state, a cell of society of any country, and therefore state laws regulate the creation of families and provide them with protection, legal and juridical defense.

It is customary to create a family out of love, mutual sympathy or attraction to each other, taking upon oneself mutual obligations defined by law and the culture of society. There are cases of marriages by calculation or agreement of parents.

State law establishes restrictions for creating a family for citizens: — who have not reached the age of majority; — who are married; — who are in direct family relations, including with adopted children; — who are incapacitated, having mental deviations; — who are entering into a union against the will of one of the parties.

A family is considered legal only when marriage is registered in registry offices.

A family is kinship relations in many generations of people living in a common area: parents, children, grandchildren and members of their families.

Spouses are expected to produce offspring and engage in raising their children. Adoption or guardianship of other people's children is also permitted.

For a child, the family is a place where their character, worldview, culture, intellect are formed, where they are cared for until a certain age, meeting their physical and emotional needs.

A family is God's plan for man, so that he would not be alone. In the process of creation there was a design that people who united in marriage union would be fruitful and multiply, populating the earth.

God divided man into male and female so that they could reunite and become one flesh, while remaining unique individuals with their own views on life.

A family implies an eternal union for all the time of man's eternal existence. Sin brought death and suffering into our world. Therefore, God's requirements for family unity were limited by the death of one of the spouses or violation of fidelity by one of the marital parties.

God's plans did not include uniting people in same-sex marriages, and such unions are forbidden by God's statutes, in which they are called abomination and vileness.

As the population grew, the Lord introduced a ban on marital relations between close relatives. Also, God's people were not allowed to create families with representatives of other peoples who worshiped other gods.

The human family is a unique arrangement of society for God's angels, who do not have marital ties among themselves and cannot produce their own kind, but are members of one Heavenly family by the fact of creation.

The Christian society can also be called a family, where all its members are children of the Heavenly Father, born of the Holy Spirit and called among themselves brothers and sisters.

God approves of marital relations created according to His will, not contrary to His laws. To receive God's blessings, a solemn wedding ceremony is provided, where in the presence of witnesses the newlyweds give mutual consent to enter into marital relations.

Marriage implies intimate connection between spouses only after the creation of a union before the church community and the state.

The institution of family and marriage has not escaped attacks from the enemy of the soul, who constantly seeks to pervert God's principles and convince people to enter into close relationships outside of marriage, make ill-considered decisions about hastily creating a family, or destroy existing unions at the desire of a selfish or lustful heart.

What do we see? Grief, divorces, perversions, suffering of innocent children, devastation in families and unhappiness. And this curse of society increases every year. And in connection with the current situation, various states issue laws legalizing relationships forbidden by God, thereby bringing chaos into the institution of marriage and family.

And among all this confusion we have to build something pure, right, having an eternal foundation, or restore what is cracking and close to destruction.

Let us take as our motto a verse from Isaiah 58:12: "And they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in."

The Lord wants to see His people wise, pure, holy and happy.

A happy family is God's plan for the last time, which He wants to write in our hearts, predicting this through the prophet Malachi. If something did not work out in my relationships, then

it is worth turning to God, who knows how to create a new heart and make something out of nothing.

Love is given by God, both for personal growth and to make happy all those who surround me. In love God is glorified in true light and is revealed in all His depth and beauty.

A husband and wife who love each other are a visual aid to how God's love works, uniting two different people into one flesh, directing different views on life in one direction. Without love everything loses meaning, and even sensual pleasures do not bring joy in life, and there is no benefit from what happens next.

The first earthly marriage was created in ideal conditions and was a reflection of God's glory. Now there is war, and many counterfeits and traps are offered. Therefore, it is worth taking into account all the peculiarities of the time and being wise and attentive builders, knowing what, from what and on what I will build. The wrong approach to creating a family is capable of destroying all my subsequent life. And to rely on the chance of success, thinking that happiness will somehow appear from nothing by itself, is a rather risky enterprise without special prospects.

Who will have a better result, the one who saves money for a car and then buys it, or the one who wants to win it quickly, buying a lottery ticket every week, spending over time amounts exceeding the cost of the desired vehicle?

So also in building a happy family, success will accompany wise and faithful builders. And love will adorn and strengthen with itself every structure, guaranteeing success in everything to which it applies its invisible visible hand.

Questions for Reflection on This Chapter

1. Please read: Gen. 1:26-29; 2:18-25; Matt. 7:24-27; 19:4-6; Prov. 18:22; 31:10-11; Eph. 5:33; Isa. 58:12; 1 Cor. 7:1-2,9-11,27-28,39; 11:8-9; Rom. 7:2-3; Matt. 18:8-9; 1 Tim. 2:13-14; 5:14; Heb. 13:4; Rev. 19:7-9; Prov. 12:4; 14:1; 19:14; 31:30 in light of this topic.

2. What did you understand from this topic?
3. How do you understand family? What is it?
4. What are families created for?
5. How long should a family exist?
6. Why did God decide to create family? Did He want to reveal something important to us through this union?
7. In their foundation all families are created out of love and mutual consent. Why then are there so many divorces?
8. What is better: to be alone or to have a family, or to be alone in an existing family?
9. Do you believe that family is not only rights and responsibilities, but also love, care for each other and mutual happiness?
10. Is it possible in our time to have family happiness?
11. Why does state power care about families and protect this union?
12. What role does family play in our society?
13. Do you think our lessons can bring happiness to families?
14. What should I do if I want to have a happy family but don't know where to find it?
15. Is family a serious enterprise?

Family Is...

Two young people, he and she, came to the registry office to submit an application to create a family. They are called "to the carpet" and begin to conduct an explanatory conversation.

They say to him: "Do you realize what trouble you're getting into? From the moment you say 'yes' to her, you no longer belong to yourself. You will have to forget about all your girlfriends, and not one of them will be able to claim you anymore. Your salary will cease to be yours, and you will work from morning to evening to feed not only yourself, but also those people who will live in your house. And your house will cease to be yours. You will have to replace all the furniture in it to please her. And in the kitchen you will simply be nobody, you will enter there by special invitation, eating not what you are used to, but what they serve you. All your friends will fade into the background, and you will be able to meet them only with your wife's permission. And you will be obliged to come home at a certain time or you will have to give explanations if you are late. And if necessary, we will administratively prosecute you or put you in prison if you suddenly decide not to fulfill your marital obligations to support the family. From now on, your whole life will revolve around this person, who will constantly seduce you and bind you to herself with the charms of tender seductions. Think carefully before you take this step."

Looking into her eyes, the government representative stated: "What have you decided for yourself? As soon as you say 'yes' to him, you will forget about all your guys, you will no longer be able to meet any of them to spend cozy evenings at a separate table in a restaurant. No one will sing songs under the window of your apartment anymore. And you yourself will belong to him all your life, expecting that he will care only about you.

Imagine, he will hug you with his hands at any time. You will have to get used to his unshaven prickly chin and listen to his snoring every night. And you will also be forced to feed him all your life, constantly inventing what dish to serve for the meal. And it's even scary to talk about dishes. You will have to wash a

whole mountain of dirty knives and forks, plates and cups, the size of the Himalayan mountains. And washing kilometers of linen will become your usual occupation. Sometimes you will work for days for your family without leaving the house. And no one will pay for all your efforts. You will become a free cook, housekeeper, housewife, servant and you won't get away from your duties. And then this one of yours will make it so that you give birth to little monsters for him who will suck the last juices out of you and will scream day and night, not letting you sleep and calmly chat with your girlfriends on the phone. And all your girlfriends will fade into the background. And if this one of yours gets a new job in another city, you will have to leave your cozy nest and drag yourself after him to unknown lands. And while he builds his career, you will have to improve your home so that everyone in it is comfortable. And it is unlikely that anyone will truly appreciate your work."

After this, the registry office representative looked intently at the young people, trying to understand whether they would make such a sacrifice for each other.

The young people silently stared at the floor, trying to comprehend what was happening. The reality of life sobered their minds, and looking at each other, they suddenly saw clearly and looked with the eyes of faith into a beautiful future with its weekdays and trials, with grief and experiences. Now they felt good, they could hold each other's hands for hours and communicate about everything. Will it continue to be so? Will this fairy tale of relationships continue forever? Will they endure all the vicissitudes of family life? What awaits them in the future? What will their relationship be like in a year, two, ten years? The unknown is frightening. But they can no longer and do not want to live without each other.

He decides to answer first: "I am ready for this sacrifice, and I am not afraid to accept all this and even do more than you told. I love this girl and am ready to serve her day and night so that she feels good and comfortable with me. My love for her will help me accept all this with joy, invent something original and

delight the heart of my beloved at all times. I am ready for any difficulties for her sake."

She, looking at her friend, broke into a smile, tightly squeezing his hand and said: "I am ready to belong to him all my life. Where he goes, I go. I am not afraid of all these duties, I want to fulfill them for his sake, and it will be good for us in this. And this will become our personal family happiness. Although we now know each other poorly, we have a whole life ahead to get to know each other better. I agree to be his wife because I find in him what my soul desires."

The registry office representative looked gloomily at the young people and stated: "I accept your application. In three weeks I invite you to come again for the solemn registration of your marriage. Only first think carefully before you take this risky step. There will be no turning back. This is a one-way road. And you will have to live on together. Are you ready for such a turn of life?"

The young people laughed, making it clear that they agreed, and cheerfully left the building.

A family is what two people build together, deciding to devote themselves to this good work.

A family is what God invented for man, giving people full power and choice in deciding this question.

A family is what begins in my life once and continues forever, beckoning me with its discoveries and prospects.

A family is that place where I can practice my love without fear of making mistakes, without being embarrassed by my inexperience, but wanting to discover an even greater depth of this gift in order to have even more of it in my life.

A family is a testing ground for testing my true and temporary feelings, to keep what is solid and set aside what is temporary.

A family is me, as I am, before the one who sees everything, knows more about me than I imagine, and yet accepts me as the one she chose.

A family is a constant conflict of two different opinions with mutual consent in mutual love.

A family is caring for each other, regardless of one's own comforts and plans.

A family is the comfort of the home hearth, which she and I create with our own hands, to sit by this flickering light of our attachment to each other and rejoice that we exist, that we are ours and always near.

A family is not only us, but also those whom we love, whom God gave us to teach us something good that we could not grasp living only as two.

A family is what connects us into one whole, while leaving us completely different.

A family is the joint realization of all our plans, interesting ideas and conceived desires in our life.

A family is the best center of influence on the world around us.

A family is that outpost that can achieve colossal success in achieving any goal if we conceive something and begin to accomplish it.

A family is an example of what love can do where it is invited into communion.

A family is...

Questions for Reflection on This Chapter

1. Please read: Phil. 1:6; Rom. 12:9-11,16-18,21; 1 Pet. 1:22; 1 Cor. 4:1-2; 13:4-8; John 15:12,17; 1 Thess. 5:15-24; Eph. 5:25; Col. 3:19; Prov. 12:4; 14:1; 19:14; Matt. 5:8-9,16,48; 6:33; 7:7-8, in light of this topic.
2. What did you understand from this topic?
3. What is a family? Give it your own definition.
4. Do you think a family can be a blessing for husband and wife?
5. What does family happiness depend on?
6. If one of the spouses builds happiness, and the other prefers to live according to the flesh, will such a family be happy?

7. Is God interested in creating happy family unions?
8. Do all newlyweds understand what they are creating and what their partner will actually be like?
9. What drives people when creating a family?
10. How to avoid a mistake and choose the right person when creating a family?
11. Do you believe that there is only one person in the whole world who can suit you? If so, what are your chances of success?
12. What should those who created a family and then realized they were hasty do?
13. Is it worth thinking before creating a family about what it is and whether it is the right decision?
14. Do the advice of wise people help avoid mistakes or fix problems when creating a happy family?
15. What role does God play when people make the decision to create a family union? Does He interfere in relationships when He is not asked about it?
16. If both newlyweds are taught to love and have agape in their hearts, will they be able to build family happiness?

Unprosperous Relationships

If I am going to build something good and happy, I should understand what materials need to be used. Stolen, unclean, cursed, decrepit, godless, worm-eaten, crumbly, flammable, close to death in no way is suitable for laying the foundation and erecting walls.

Romantic relationships can turn my head and begin to govern my feelings. But any holiday eventually comes to an end. My eyes open, and I understand that I am naked and have sinned. Then the desire to hide from God appears.

Common sense and biblical warnings very often prompt me to moments that I will not be able to see immediately. It is important to note that the advice of experienced people who have close relationships with Jesus carries power and blessings.

Friendly connections are good in themselves. They bring joy to the heart and fill my life with meaning when they do not contradict God's will and do not deprive me of freedom.

There is that category of people and relationships that will never be successful and will not bring blessings into life. Although the Lord can turn everything to good and teach me something through my mistakes, it is still necessary to be prudent before starting to build or plan something.

Once I was talking with my friend, Olga (name changed), who fell in love with a man who came to her city to work from another country. This person met Olya and communicated with her a lot, opening his heart and admiring his new girlfriend. She fell in love with this man and dreamed of always being near him. But soon Olya learned that this guy was married in his homeland and had a child. She was shocked, but did not want to leave the man. She felt so good and comfortable with him! She had never experienced this before. Olya was ready for him and romantic relationships to abandon her principles, lose her virginity, abandon all her friends, leave the church, but something held her back, and she asked for help, somewhere understanding that everything was going wrong. I talked with

her for a long time, giving different arguments and reasoning, trying to explain that these relationships would have no prospects. Olya understood this, but said that she loved her friend and wanted to be near him in her "good." To all my attempts to explain something, she agreed with my words, but immediately declared that she wanted to always be near this person. When we parted, I prayed for Olya for a long time, understanding that only the Lord is able to destroy the spell of this seduction and change something. Soon I learned that they parted, but the wound in Olya's soul was too deep for what happened to be simply forgotten.

A person who is married is in no way suitable for creating a family. No matter how comfortable and romantic it is for you to ride in someone else's car, investing all your money and your time in it, this vehicle does not belong to you and will not bring the happiness that you dream of finding.

Friendship does not set boundaries in the category of our relationships, but I should define boundaries where they are needed. Communicating with representatives of the other sex, I am not against friendly relations, but I always make corrections, saying that I love my wife and proceeding from this I can continue to be friends. I do not wear a wedding ring and to avoid misunderstanding I immediately try to inform all new people of my status. This helps and protects.

Also, if I am married, even in an unsuccessful marriage, it is not worth planning a better family with more promising relationships. Such a union has no good future, and it will not receive any blessings.

The enemy of the soul will always try to seduce my mind, offering something dangerous in beautiful packaging of romance and infatuation. It is worth fighting such thoughts at the very beginning, as soon as they come to mind. Jesus warned that even a lustful look is a sin in God's eyes, not to mention actions.

Also, one should not bind one's life with a person who is divorced not due to adultery on the other side. You can plan

something common with someone who had a family, in case this person was widowed, and the death of the other half made him free for marriage. There are no prohibitions here, but there is no need to hurry either.

Violation of marital fidelity also takes place in our society, and such a lifestyle is widely advertised in films and has an influence on people who are married. This is a sin unto death. Therefore, before even admitting such a thought into my mind, it is worth thinking whether I need to die and lose Eternity for the sake of momentary pleasure.

I know very many cases when believers left families and the church precisely for this reason.

God's principles regarding marital fidelity have not changed one iota. Although our attitude has become more liberal toward such people and their actions, this does not cancel God's law, and sin does not bring blessings and happiness into life, although it can provide pleasure and look romantic.

Relationships and creating a family with someone who has vices have no prospects. We all sometimes sin and can fall and make mistakes, but the Lord is able to correct this. When a person has a sinful addiction, even considering himself a believer, it is necessary to stay away from him and not plan serious relationships, and if there are already some plans, and the sin of this candidate for marriage union was revealed to you, then you should run from him as from fire.

I saw one video where at a gas station as a result of an accident, gasoline spilled all over the territory. People walked through this puddle and did not even think what mortal danger it represented until it all flared up with bright flames. After this, everyone died in the fire. Do you want to build your life on a powder keg that will definitely explode?

If you are already married to such a person, then after you believed, other laws come into force, and God takes under protection all who make a covenant with Him. However, creating a family with people addicted to sin is a very risky enterprise. Run from such candidates. Sin will not die in your

marriage, but will grow and be established, wanting to consume you too.

What is the vice that your chosen one might be infected with? I will give some examples: alcohol, sexual, pornographic, drug addictions, passion for games, smoking, evil temper, envy, pride, foul language, deception, gluttony, idolatry, unbelief, lack of living interest in prayer and knowledge of God's will, rudeness, desire to enter into close relationships before marriage and other things of this spirit. Turn to the law and revelation, and the Lord in their light will reveal everything.

A vice is that sin which controls the will of a person and constantly beckons him to repeat the same evil action. God is able to destroy any addiction. But make sure that this has already happened, and the person is established in Christ and has gained victory.

If I choose as my life companion a "rake," I should not hope that they will lie peacefully under my feet. Rakes know how to hurt very much, even when you do not expect it at all.

Questions for Reflection on This Chapter

1. Please read: Deut. 6:16; Rom. 7:1-3; Lev. 21:13-15; Matt. 4:7; 5:27-32; 19:3-9; Luke 16:17-18; Ex. 20:14-15; 1 Cor. 7:23; Phil. 1:6; 1 Tim. 6:10-12; Prov. 2:10-22; 6:23-35; 7:1-27; 2 Cor. 6:14-18; 1 Tim. 3:1-13 in light of this topic.
2. What did you understand from this topic?
3. Should there be a prospect of happy family life in marriage?
4. Why will God not bless what has a sinful foundation, even when people love each other?
5. Is it important to rely on one's feelings when choosing a life partner?
6. Is it correct to think that a righteous person can by their righteousness convert their chosen wicked spouse to God? Justify your answer.
7. If I create a family with a sister from my denomination, is it important to consider what spirit and status she is of?
8. If I ask for God's blessing on marriage with a wicked partner, or I myself live in vices and go through the rite of

wedding and pastor's blessing, will this union become blessed?

9. What should I do to please my flesh in choosing a life companion and inherit Eternal life?
10. Do you think it is possible to tempt God in choosing a life partner?
11. What is needed to understand that my future husband or wife is pure, and I myself am pure for creating a happy family?
12. Or maybe the main thing is to create a family, and everything will resolve itself in marriage?
13. Did you learn something useful from this lesson? If yes, what?
14. What was the problem of the sons of God from Gen. 6:2? Why did such unions finally corrupt God's people of that time?
15. Will it be right to have a happy family based on Biblical standards in our lawless world? Can the motto "live like everyone else" save me from unnecessary problems?

Forbidden Unions

Once, coming to worship, I received an invitation to a wedding that was to take place on Sunday in the building of our church. The bride was our sister Milana (name changed), and I did not know the groom. I inquired who this person was who wanted to take our sister as his wife. I was told that this guy was from the world, and he traditionally belongs to another confession. I was assured that he was a very good person, and that the young people loved each other. At that time I was only learning the science of love, but I was surprised that our responsible brothers agreed to such an event.

From church history I know that for such decisions our brethren were deprived of membership, but now for some reason someone decided that such an event should take place within the framework of our community. I am not stating that such an approach has become the norm in all German congregations and has become the doctrine of our church, but I have much evidence that in our days such actions are treated quite loyally and violators are not reprimanded.

I was not closely acquainted with Milana and therefore did not enter into discussion about this. I simply did not go anywhere, which many of the brethren did in response to such a violation of God's statutes.

The wedding took place, and when the newlyweds appeared at the meeting as a family, I wished them to love each other and something else good.

Time passed. The first days the young people came together to all worship services and knelt down together during prayer. Then Milana began to appear every other time alone, and a little later completely alone. Time passed, and Milana was no longer seen at worship, and her duties were performed by other people.

During my life in the church I saw many unions when my brethren created their families with unbelieving partners. With some of them I had communication before the conclusion of

their marriage and tried to dissuade them. I simply observed others. But seeing determination and desire to go precisely this way, I stepped aside and waited for how it would end. From the statistics of my observations I derived a pattern. Such unions do not have God's blessing, and there are no exceptions to the rules. Some families collapse, someone leaves after this into the world, someone cools down and stops participating in the life of the church. All these people lose friends, but someone sometimes repents and tries to be restored, but they are no longer shown trust.

From the history of God's people we know that the unions of believing sons with unbelieving women were a curse for the spiritual brotherhood, and for this reason general apostasy came, and then came the flood, which destroyed all unfaithful people.

Leading the people of Israel out of Egypt, the Lord commanded not to enter into marriage unions with foreigners and not to give their daughters to pagans.

Such prohibitions were periodically renewed, but many biblical heroes were inclined to violate this command, and we see sad consequences.

There is one positive example of Ruth, who after the death of her husband accepted the faith of her mother-in-law and became for many of us a model of marital fidelity. She even entered into the genealogy of Jesus. But this is rather an exception than a rule.

As a believer I testify about God's love to all people. And very often the miracle of conversion happens, when someone responds to God's call and makes a covenant with God, and his unbelieving husband or wife prefers to remain in the world. The church accepts such people, and the new faith is a blessing for their families. These converted people actively participate in the life of the church and remain faithful to their Savior until death, although they suffer greatly from the fact that their family persists in their unbelief, and some children go into the world.

If you, reader, are not yet married, but love Jesus and want to create a family, then lay it on your heart to study God's will concerning union with an unbelieving person, in order to live in accordance with God's command.

No matter how kind and delicate your unbelieving friend may appear, but the very fact of his unbelief should become the most convincing proof that this is not your person. You should not bind your life with him.

Before marrying your chosen one, make sure that he is married to Christ, even if he is from your denomination. And you yourself must be in union with the Savior.

Our program is designed for those who already know God and have a personal relationship with him, who want to grow further in faith.

If you think that your union in violation of clear God's rules will be an exception, and your unbelieving partner will turn to God through your faith, then I want to disappoint you. Most likely you will lose God and go into the world. Swimming against the current alone is difficult, but possible. But if in your boat there is someone who constantly knocks the oars out of your hands, then you will not be able to get anywhere.

The exception will only be the case when you, having a family, believed in Christ and became God's son or daughter.

What is the danger of an unbelieving spouse? This is a completely different spirit in your home. Before the wedding this spirit can be quiet and obliging, and to win you, he is ready for any sacrifice. The enemy of the soul does not touch his subject, blessing him for union with you. But when "yes" "yes" sounds, then all the forces of evil begin to control the will of your unbelieving life companion, and you understand that an irreparable mistake has occurred, and something in your life is collapsing. Family happiness in Christ in this case simply cannot be.

With an unbelieving person you can have peace only on the conditions of his unbelief. In other situations, the evil spirit will always destroy everything that is repugnant to it.

God does not abandon His children even in such cases. He continues to protect and teach them while there is hope, but those who have fallen away leave God because they cannot withstand the constant opposition of evil forces and for the sake of peace in the family they give up and make concessions, and then compromise with sin.

Although this topic has recently caused much controversy and disagreement, nowhere in the Bible is there a single loophole to find justification for such unions and receive a blessing on what God cursed.

We can and should love and bless everyone, including our enemies, but God, although He sends rain and sun to the righteous and unrighteous, considers as His own only those faithful to Him and grants His Kingdom only to those who were faithful until death, to receive the crown of life.

To avoid fornication we are advised to have each his own wife. And if a person has fallen into fornication, he must repent or marry his girlfriend. Sin will never have blessing.

What God has declared unclean remains so forever. What God has cleansed should not be considered unclean.

If my children do not believe in God and create a family with those like themselves, then I have no right to interfere with them and will love them. If an unbelieving son wants to have a believing wife, then this will not bring blessing to the believing girl, even if the parents of her chosen one share her faith. The same applies to unbelieving daughters.

I want my children to be happy, but let this happiness have a true Biblical foundation and God's approval.

If a mistake has been made, then my repentance can correct everything, but the consequences of sin will remain in my life forever.

Questions for Reflection on This Chapter

1. Please read: Gen. 6:2,5-7; 24:37-38; 28:1; Deut. 6:16; Ex. 34:15-16; Ruth 1:3-4,15-17; 4:13-17; Mal. 2:11-12; Ezra 9:1-3,12; 10:10; Neh. 10:30; 13:23-30; 1 Kings 1:3; 11:1-12; Acts 10:28; 2 Cor. 6:14-18; Matt. 7:24,26; 1 Cor. 7:2,10-17,23; Rom. 7:1-3 in light of this topic.
2. What did you understand from this topic?
3. Why did the Lord give a prohibition on marriage with unbelieving people?
4. What is the difference between a believing and unbelieving person? Maybe the main thing is that he be good and rich?
5. Do you know examples of unions described in this lesson?
6. Can it be that two people with different religious views will be able to live peacefully in their family? Should this be an example for us?
7. Does God's prohibition on creating a marriage union with unbelievers operate in our days?
8. What should be done if in a family both spouses did not believe in God, and then one of them believed, thereby bringing problems into the family?
9. Why cannot a believing and unbelieving person have complete God's blessing on common affairs? In whom or in what is the problem?
10. Is betrayal of God a sin? Is it possible to violate God's statutes with impunity?
11. Why in union with an unbelieving person does it most often happen that the believer loses faith and cools down, and not vice versa?
12. What influence will a pastor who entered into a forbidden marriage while carrying out ministry in the church have on you?
13. Does the state prohibit mixed marriages? What is the difference between church and state authority?
14. Does God call us to divorce unbelieving partners?
15. Is there hope for Eternal life for those who made a mistake in choosing a life partner?

Foolish Marriages

Each of us, one way or another, dreams in childhood about our own family. The exception may be only mentally or emotionally ill people. A child who grew up in a family sees a model of union between father and mother, between other people with whom he intersects in life. The society and culture of his country create a certain idea about family life. And films, books and all kinds of television programs on this topic convince the mind of a certain behavior model.

In childhood I dreamed that some of my classmates would definitely become my wives. Until 14 years old I did not even imagine where children come from and how they are formed in the womb of a mother, and I was very surprised by the information I read in one of the books for pregnant women that I accidentally found among my mother's things. My views on family changed. I began to understand that I would be able to produce offspring. Along with my views, my motives also changed, which like a reed swayed from all kinds of winds of teachings and influences that came into my life. I did not understand at all what a happy family should be, but I knew for sure that I should have one.

Perestroika in Soviet society brought with it new Western ideology about family life, or rather about the semblance of family outside of marriage. And I saw how my friends acquired some girlfriends, and then others, and then still others, making it clear that they wanted to find the one who would suit them.

Unfortunately, there is an opinion that in marriage the main thing is sexual pleasure, which should give special enjoyment. A young organism can quickly form hormones of joy and attraction to the opposite sex, and a fire burns in the heart, burning through feelings and emotions. And under the influence of such attractions many young people enter into marriage or, worse, create extramarital unions to satisfy their carnal desires. Such an approach to life is very foolish and destructive, but modern media is exactly what propagates it.

God created and blessed sex within the family with a loved one, but the enemy of the soul brought this out for public viewing, making such relationships the meaning of life. And when the union is still created, Satan tries to inspire that your partner is not like that, that he does not bring as much pleasure as there should be, and trips to the side begin in search of romantic pleasures. The consciousness of a person is damaged, and he is already incapable of creating his own happiness, and there is no question of family happiness. It is foolish to build on this.

Another foolish motive for creating a family is the fear of remaining alone and becoming completely unsuitable for family life. The opinion of society creates the illusion that the best time to create a family is from 17 to 25-30 years, especially for women, and then it is too late, and you are simply not interesting to anyone.

It would be wiser to say that a family needs to be created when a person is ready for it morally and has knowledge, when he is able to take responsibility. But you cannot build happiness on fear, and without knowing the foundations of happiness, you can create anything except a happy family.

The fear of being alone, being an old maid, missing your chance, not having children, being separated from a loved one and other fears are a very foolish foundation for creating any family, not to mention a happy one.

Sometimes the decision to enter into marriage is motivated by the fear of death of a dear person in case of your refusal. I know a situation when my brethren asked to pray for their daughter, who decided to marry a drug addict. She explained her decision by saying that he would perish without her, and with her he has a chance to reform and become a normal person. And he told her that if she left him, he would commit suicide. History contains many examples of such foolishness when such threats were carried out. But to build a family out of pity and compassion for a partner or for yourself is foolish. We are not forbidden to be friends with people, although there is advice that these not be evil associations, but to build your happiness on the problems of another, considering yourself a

savior, is a rather foolish motive and foundation. It is also sad that such people can carry out their threats and take their own lives.

There is another kind of pity, when it is simply a pity to leave a person alone, because without you he will be bad, and he will suffer, and his suffering will hurt me.

A family is not a charitable organization for providing emotional rehabilitation to friends. For bringing a person out of crisis there are other instruments of influence and salvation.

And if a person is sick, and it is very pitiful for him, then creating a family with him will not heal his illness, but can kill a healthy person too.

A sense of duty is also not the best motive for building family happiness. For example, my parents decided that I should take as my wife the one whom they consider worthy for me, or whom they liked. I should consider their assessment, but it is necessary to listen to my heart too. And if someone of the opposite sex showed care about me or was kind and friendly to me, then I become a debtor to this person, and the enemy of the soul inspires me with thoughts that I can repay the debt only by creating a family with him. I know cases when precisely such motives moved people when concluding marriage unions. Although the Bible teaches us that we should not be debtors to anyone, it does not mean creating a family on such a shaky foundation.

Another type of frequent foolishness consists in hasty decisions. If I want to have a house, I do not build four walls with a roof without foundation, just so that it does not blow and does not drip. In such things I am more prudent and do not want to invest money in what will collapse at the first hurricane. But when creating a family for some reason this logic stops working for many. Wisdom does not hurry to make quick decisions in such important matters. It weighs everything, analyzes, listens to its heart, considers the opinion of wise and experienced people, consults with God, understands responsibility and tests relationships. My future house will not suffer if I decide to make

statistical calculations and test it for strength and stability, attracting appropriate specialists to this. It will not be superfluous to get to know better the one with whom I will have to live all my life. It is better now to spend more time for close acquaintance than later to blame yourself for haste.

Marriage by calculation is also not a very wise decision. "Rich Pinocchio" may turn out to be a very bad spouse, with whom it will be unbearable to live together with an abundance of everything. To give your life to another in exchange for temporary material goods is a rather foolish enterprise.

Although in all these cases there may be and are exceptions, wisdom still has its own principles and always consults with reason, and then protects those who chose it as a friend.

Being foolish has become fashionable and popular, and this spirit even infects believers. To be foolish when creating a family is a tragedy for life.

Once we were repairing an old house, and its owner complained about how much money he had already poured into this "smelly barn," and it still did not stop being old and smelly.

Questions for Reflection on This Chapter

1. Please read: Prov. 18:22; 30:18-20; 1 Cor. 7:23; 15:33; Ps. 36:16; 1 John 4:18; Rom. 13:8; Prov. 1:5-8,22-33; 8:1-21; 10:1; 11:27-30; 12:15; 13:20; 14:1,11-12,24; 15:21; 16:22; 18:2; 23:9; 27:22; 28:20; Eccl. 10:3; Jer. 4:22; Matt. 7:18-20,24-27 in light of this topic.
2. What did you understand from this topic?
3. Why cannot pity be a good counselor in choosing a life partner?
4. Is it possible to build something good on carnal attractions to each other?
5. Why can fear of loneliness and any other fear not be good building material in building a happy family?
6. Can all rich single people be good family people?
7. Does a person's wealth speak of his wisdom?
8. Is it wise to create a family out of a sense of duty?

9. Can the influence of hormones lead people to making ill-considered and foolish decisions?
10. What should I do if I understand that I am foolish?
11. Can someone wise in his own eyes make another happy?
12. Did you learn something useful for yourself from this lesson?
13. Why is it worth approaching the creation of a family responsibly?
14. Can hasty decisions when creating a family lead to catastrophe?
15. Do you know exceptions to those rules that were presented in this lesson? Can they be guided by?
16. Do you understand that the presented examples also apply to believers?

Age Difference

At one of the camp meetings I met brother Victor (name changed), who during joint walks told me about his family happiness and about how the Lord sent him Rebecca from Gen. 24:15, who now delights his heart.

My attention was drawn to the fact that Victor was 24 years older than his wife, and I asked him various questions to understand how husbands and wives with such an age difference live. In the end, I understood that all ages submit to love. And his Rebecca meanwhile remained at home alone, resting from the family.

On the last evening, after the closing of the camp meeting, Victor wanted to go home without waiting until morning. He decided not to inform his wife about his unexpected return, so as not to disturb her sleep. Upon arriving home, my friend saw a strange car in his parking lot, and upon entering the house, discovered an unfamiliar man in it. That night no one else slept in Victor's house. Unfortunately, Rebecca turned out not to be a Biblical hero.

Does the Bible tell us anything about what age newlyweds should be, and what is an acceptable age difference between spouses?

How old was the mother of Jesus when she heard the news of the Son's birth? I read a study that she was about 15 years old at that time. And how old was Joseph when he was betrothed to Mary? He was a widower, in advanced years, having in his care his sons and daughters, who later tried to influence the younger Jesus, trying to draw Him into their worldly life. Mary had no other children except Jesus, therefore the Lord entrusted John to take care of His mother.

Studying the works of the Spirit of Prophecy, I also did not encounter specific numbers about what age difference is acceptable when creating a family. We are given advice that it should not be large, especially if the wife is older.

Why is God silent on this issue and does not set any restrictions?

Recently my 60-year-old acquaintance shared a photo of his newborn daughter, sister of two little brothers. And their mother is about 40.

Who can determine whether this is an acceptable age for a happy marriage? Where is that boundary in years that is better not to violate? In this matter the Lord gave us absolute freedom, but at the same time endows us with reason.

Once I met a young man who praised his girlfriend, who was 14 years older than him. He convinced me that there simply is no better person in the world. And I listened to him and tried to understand what would happen next.

My friend, Vadim (name changed), decided to marry the best girl in the world. But at the premarital counseling the pastor told him that the wife should not be younger than five years, maximum six. The minister considered this the most acceptable option for excellent family relationships. Vadim traveled to all the churches in our country, trying to find one that would correspond to pastoral standards. He found one, got married, and after many years complained to me that the sister who was 10 years younger was close to his heart, but he did not even consider her so as not to fall under the disapproval of the church. I listened and was amazed at such advice.

God respects our choice. He unites in marriage those whom we choose, declaring before Heaven as husband or wife. No matter how society looks at the newlyweds, whatever they say about them, there comes a moment when they are left alone with each other and begin to build their family happiness, regardless of what others think of them. If their hearts have known agape love and are set on strengthening this love in relationships, then their family union becomes a place where God's angels help in building a cozy hearth, warming their united hearts with the warmth of happiness and mutual love.

The world teaches us that only the young, rich, strong and beautiful are worthy of true happiness, and very colorfully

shows the path to happiness in its films and books. And what the continuation will be, no one is interested.

And what should people do who have fallen in love with each other and are drawn heart to heart, having an age difference, and their friends do not understand how one can act this way contrary to all norms and customs?

Wisdom suggests that it is worth considering the appearance of children who need healthy and capable parents. An elderly father may die before the time when the children grow up, and who will engage in their upbringing? And will a mother in years be able to give a small child the attention that he needs? Health reform helps to be in shape at any time of life, but who studies it?

When does that age come when it is better not to create a family? What will happen when old age covers the body of one of the spouses? Will love endure such a test? Will marriage become a heavy burden in anticipation of the imminent death of a loved one, to find someone younger?

Marriage is a union of man and woman forever. It is valid for all age categories and has no retroactive force until death separates the spouses.

If the age difference is very large, then there is a danger that the younger spouse will compare their companion with younger persons, where the energy of youth will always be the winner.

Years give a person experience and teach wisdom, lack of health helps to value what is lost, and pain in the body points to the superiority of smooth movements and caution. This is the reality that young people need to take into account. Each age has its own peculiarities, and they manifest at a time determined by God.

Will my family happiness withstand the opinion of the world? It is for me to decide.

Love teaches to love at all times, and years only establish me in love, which brings happiness not only to me, but also to those whom I love.

The difference between 18 and 38 seems very large. But between 78 and 98 it is somehow not so significant. What is the difference?

No matter how much you are drawn to your older or younger friend, weigh all the pros and cons before you begin family relationships. Will you be faithful to him even if he grows old before you? Will he remain faithful to you in his love if gray hair covers your head and there is no paint in the store? Will a woman taught by years respect her young husband or choose the path of "general in a skirt," always dissatisfied with everything?

It is impossible to answer all these questions unambiguously correctly.

But if happiness exists and is successfully being built by both spouses, then it is unlikely that the desire will arise to destroy it with one's own hands or allow it to be broken by strangers.

In any case, the last word and decision remains with the husband and wife. A Solid Foundation will help to endure all storms and trials and enter into Eternity with a pure heart and great experience of happiness, love and friendship.

So what age difference is acceptable? It is worth considering the culture and mentality of the region where this takes place. The state does not prohibit entering into marriage starting from 18 years. But it is also necessary to have the support of the church brotherhood, so as not to be a stumbling block to anyone.

And without mutual agape love, nothing should even be started. There will be no benefit from this union. We read in Jer. 17:9: "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?"

Questions for Reflection on This Chapter

1. Please read: John 13:34; Gen. 23:1-2; 24:1,58-67; 25:1-2; Prov. 1:7; 2:10-19; 3:13-18; 4:23-27; 9:10-18; 13:10; Eccl. 8:1; 12:13-14; 1 Cor. 3:11-15; 7:2; 13:1-8; James 3:13-18 in light of this topic.

2. What did you understand from this topic?
3. Does it matter what age difference loving people have?
4. What age difference when creating a family do you consider acceptable?
5. Can the advanced age of one of the parents affect the health of future children?
6. Why are there no instructions in the Bible about what age difference is acceptable for creating a family?
7. Can the age difference between husband and wife affect family happiness?
8. Will two spouses with a large age difference be able to be happy in their family if they both wish to be happy?
9. In your opinion, what age difference between spouses is large, and what is small?
10. Do you know marriages where the husband is much older than his wife or where the wife is older than her husband? Are these happy people?
11. What does the happiness of a family with a large age difference depend on?
12. Should one consider accepted notions in society about age when deciding to create one's family?
13. Will God bless that marriage where the husband is much older than his chosen one?
14. Can mutual love between spouses make their marriage happy, despite the age difference?
15. If a husband and wife with a large age difference are happy with each other, does this mean that they are playing theater for the public?

Is It Worth Understanding Each Other?

He and she came to the pastor, tenderly holding each other's hands, with a request for blessing on their union. He was American, she was from India. They met and became acquainted at an international youth congress. From the first minutes of acquaintance they felt that they were created for each other. Although they could not communicate and did not understand each other, their mutual love covered all these shortcomings. They wanted to always be together. After some resistance and disagreement from the pastor, the young man still got his way, and they were declared husband and wife.

After some time this young man came to the pastor for advice. He did not know what to do with his wife, who lives by different rules and prepares strange food. Although she is learning English, her understanding of life and everyday life is somehow wild and strange. He could not imagine how to continue living with the one he chose. And communication in broken language led to the fact that it was easier for him not to communicate. Friends also could not visit their house, as they did not know how to behave with such a couple.

Once I met Martin and Maria (names changed), who lived in another city and sometimes attended our meeting. They always sat next to me. He was a local German, and she was born in Africa. I observed this couple and tried to understand why they decided to unite into one family. Later I learned their story. Martin fell in love with a girl from his own people, who was close to his heart, but his relatives opposed such a union and dissuaded Martin from the wrong step. Everything reached the point that their union did not take place. Martin's grief knew no bounds, and he decided to take revenge on his relatives. He went to a Christian dating site and chose for himself the most unattractive sister, invited her to visit and married her. All the relatives were shocked by such a marriage and broke off relations with their relative. Martin rejoiced, but continued to live with Maria, as he did not want to remain alone. Maria

quickly mastered the German language and could freely express her thoughts.

When my wife and I invited them to visit us, they turned out to be quite interesting interlocutors and told us about their life and plans. But there was such a feeling that they are unfamiliar with each other and have no feelings between themselves, do not touch each other, although they are always and everywhere together and perform ministry in a unified understanding. They have no children, and very much is unclear in their relationship.

Quite often I met people, citizens of different countries, who, having met each other, fell in love and planned to create a family. I had to conduct small premarital consultations. I advised them, despite their common native language, to make a decision that they have one citizenship. Which one? They had to decide this themselves. I explained this by the fact that between countries and peoples sometimes separations and military conflicts occur, and it is unknown how in such a situation their joint life will turn out, and what will happen to their children. And later, observing their marriage, I noticed that some such friends have a lot of worries about the fact that their relatives are quite far away, and visiting them periodically is very costly, in addition, constant rushing from country to country exhausts and creates incomprehensible fuss. And children cannot understand where their home is and why they have to travel back and forth so often?

One acquaintance of mine chose a bride from another city and every weekend traveled to her for dates. This girl was quite pretty and had an attractive physique. She was very sociable and cheerful. But the young man had questions that he decided to ask me. He said that he had never seen her with a Bible in her hands, although she herself was from a believing family, and he did not understand how this would affect their future family. I did not know what to answer, but expressed the assumption that if a person is not taught in a believing family to study the Bible, then most likely he will never do this and will not teach this to his children. Something like this happened, although the prettiness did not disappear.

I also know those who created a family before conscription into the army, and then went to military service, leaving their wife to wait for a couple of years for their beloved. I did not understand such unions, thinking that one could get married after the service.

Once we were in search of new housing, and we were offered to move into a house whose owner was seriously ill, and relatives sent her to a nursing home. She was a member of our church.

Later I learned the fate of this woman. She got married at the beginning of World War II, and her husband was taken to the front. A year later he died in battle. Grief became part of this woman's life. She loved her first husband so much that she did not want to create a family with anyone else. But over the years she decided to marry a paralyzed brother and take care of him. This man had a small son, whom our sister began to raise. She never knew her new husband, but tenderly cared for him until his death. And when I communicated with this elderly sister, she told me how she loves her first husband, and showed me a photo of a German officer.

I gave all these examples, familiar to me from life, not condemning anyone, but trying to understand whether it is necessary to take such steps, so that then all your life you think about the correctness of your act?

God is able to turn any mistake into a blessing. Although it will cost me very dearly, I will understand something. I like to learn from other people's mistakes, and then warn other people too. Although I myself have quite a few life blunders, but having gone through this path, I urge not to follow my rakes or the rakes of our friends. Someone listens and "takes note," and someone decides to prove to me that I am wrong, and feelings are a fairly reliable advisor. I can only observe, so that later I can tell other people about what happens to those who build their happiness on sand.

And I also noticed that someone makes mistakes in choosing a life partner, but does not learn from them, believing that next time they will definitely be lucky, and steps on other rakes, but

considers them random bad luck and goes looking for new adventures.

Sometimes I found myself in a situation when I realized that in order to understand the essence of things, you need to let them into your life and personally taste them. But I do not advise anyone to experiment in marriage union. People are not things. And the one who becomes my flesh will not be able to simply, painlessly for both of us, leave me.

Love can work a miracle and correct any, even the most foolish mistake. But is it worth condemning yourself to such trials ahead of time, without even trying to understand and study the science of happiness. After all, you can make sure that happiness exists, and it operates according to certain laws. If I invent my own laws and try to live by them, then maybe something will work out for me, but for others I will become a visual example of how not to act.

I tell you about my mistakes and my observations of the lives of others, and you read and draw conclusions yourself.

And decide for yourself, do you need this?

Questions for Reflection on This Chapter

1. Please read: John 6:33-34; 1 Cor. 14:6-11; Prov. 18:22; 21:30; 31:30-31; Job 12:7-14; Ps. 1:1-3; 72:24-25; Neh. 13:23-24; 1 Cor. 3:10-19; Prov. 1:22-33; 3:35; 10:1; 11:29-30; 13:16,29; 14:1,15; 15:5; 16:22; 17:21,25; 19:3; 26:8; 28:26; Rom. 12:9-10; John 15:12-13; 1 Pet. 1:22 in light of this topic.
2. What did you understand from this topic?
3. Is it wise to create a family to spite others?
4. If someone bites off their finger to make it unpleasant for enemies, can such a person be considered wise?
5. Why when creating a family is it worth thinking about a joint future?
6. What should a person planning serious relationships with someone from another country pay attention to?
7. Can marriage affect my relationship with the Lord?

8. Is it important what kind of person you choose for yourself, and does he speak your language?
9. Does every person from your denomination suit as a life partner?
10. How to predict whether my union will be a mistake or a blessing for both of us?
11. Is it wise to rely on the motto: "What if I get lucky?"
12. Can a union with a foreigner create problems in the family?
13. Is it important that everyone at home speak the same language and understand each other?
14. Do you believe that spouses, whatever they may be, become emotionally attached to each other?
15. Is it worth recommending divorce to people if they realize that they do not suit each other?

The Lord in Our Love

Is it possible to create a family without God's blessing? It is possible, but with blessing it is better. And is it possible to eat food without praying? It is possible, but with prayer it is better. And is it possible to arrange your life without God? It is possible, but with God it is safer and more interesting. And is it possible to inherit Eternal Life without faith in Jesus Christ? It is possible, but with the prefix "im." And is it possible to build Eternal relationships with someone, but without God? You can call it that, but these will be earthly and temporary relationships.

If you imagine Eternity without God, it will be incessant darkness and languishing of the spirit. But such, fortunately, is impossible.

I have seen many times how families are created, how newlyweds declare their consent to become husband and wife. First, according to the law of the country, they declare this at the registry office. And then, if they want, they ask for God's blessing on their marriage before the face of their church, giving each other a marriage vow and a promise of marital fidelity.

After such events, two people are declared husband and wife, and the whole society considers their union a family with all the ensuing rights and responsibilities.

And why is it necessary to ask for God's blessing on the union of two people? After all, they love each other, and everything is fine with them. I know Uncle Vanya, who lived happily with Aunt Anya without God, and they lived in perfect harmony. Why is a wedding in church needed?

And someone decided that a family should not be created either, because the main thing is to love each other, so you can live together without registration. And it is enough to briefly inform God about your intentions, which, in general, is optional.

I think that believers immediately heard the catch in these questions and statements. As for marriage, in church society it is customary to organize everything with God's blessing. And this is correct.

But what about friendship and love? I want to have a friend, but I don't have one. I ask the Lord to send me such a person, and the Lord answers. Someone who is close to my heart appears in my life. I can receive him immediately, or I can wait for years. But here he appeared and became mine. And what next? Do we go to ask for God's blessing on our friendship and do we bring before the face of the whole church solemn oaths that we will be faithful friends until death separates us? I have not yet experienced such a miracle of friendship. Imagine how this would look! Two brothers go up on stage or a brother with a sister, or two sisters, and the pastor before the face of all parishioners solemnly asks: "Dear brother Vanya, do you agree in joy and in sorrow, in health and in sickness, in poverty and in wealth to take brother Petya as a friend and love him all your life until death separates you?", and after mutual "Yes. Yes!" they are declared lawful friends. How do you like that? Why are you laughing? After all, serious decision-making is happening. This amuses us simply because it is not customary and looks foolish in our eyes. I do not suggest that you practice such a thing, but let's consider this question in more detail.

Why is blessing on a family needed? So that this earthly decision would be bound also in Heaven, so that God could lead and direct this union, had the right to interfere and correct those who err, could work miracles and teach two different people to respect the opinion and choice of another and do much so that life would be happy.

Even unbelieving people understand that it is better to live with God's blessing. They are sometimes ready to pay money so that someone would pray for them and bless them before God. The Lord respects people's choices and gladly participates in their happiness. Jesus performed His first miracle at a marriage feast, turning water into a useful drink. The Lord loves to bless those who lawfully ask for this.

And how does friendship differ from marriage? After all, this is also a union of two sides, two hearts that have decided to dedicate their lives to each other, spend time with each other, solve common problems, do different things, have cognitive communication and friendly relationships.

Do these friends know how to be friends? Did anyone teach them this at school? Or were they already born with a step-by-step friendship program in their head, and now they will implement it in practice? And where does the carnal nature go when two egoists decide on joint friendship? It probably dies from despair and fear and ceases to have strength and power over friendly hearts?

I know some verses about friends, which say: "If a friend turned out suddenly, and not a friend and not an enemy, but so... don't scold him, chase him away...". The world quickly picks up such statements and successfully practices them. And if you were rejected once, then the second and third time will not be long in coming. And the heart reacts in its own way and closes for a long time or forever. Everyone is busy searching for real friends, and if someone does not meet this requirement, then he can be pushed aside and search for another. And do you know where real friends are produced? Share this "fishing spot" with us too.

The truth is that we do not know how to be friends and be friends, but we can learn this.

God's blessing on any friendship and any relationship will never be superfluous, and it will never be foolish to ask God to teach this and bless me in my decision to be friends.

But let's go further. The Lord commanded us not only to be friends, but also to love one another. Shall we again imagine a pastor who blesses us for mutual love? No, we won't?

But should we pray about this love, even if we have decided to love each other? Should we ask a friend whether he loves me? Or should we only guess about this, or consider it self-evident?

Prayer for blessing on love for a friend and for mutual love will never be superfluous. Love for one another is a union of two sides for all life with continuation in Eternity. I bind myself with bonds of love forever, to learn this here and then practice it all endless ages. I am very interested in comprehending such a science, and it is new to me. I was not born with such knowledge. I need One who knows how to love and can teach me this.

I ask for God's blessing on my love and friendship. The Lord hears this prayer and answers it. It is based on His Word, where He commanded us to love this way. Without Him all my attempts to love will turn into failure. And with Him I will have blessing in agape. And if my friend asks for the same, then our common cause, bound by us on earth, will be bound also in Heaven. And we will receive an answer from the Heavenly Father. And if we are gathered in love in the name of Jesus, then He will be in the midst of us. I, my friend and Jesus. We love each other and create from ourselves a strong triangle of love, becoming a strong structure for solid construction of God's structures.

Inviting Jesus into our love, I protect this union from various false accusations and attempts to destroy it. The Lord knows how we need to be protected, and holds firmly in His hand, so that no one steals us.

And we pray to God and proceed to studying each other, rejoicing that the Lord is with us. Is it possible to be friends and love without prayer about this? It is possible, but I don't know for how long. And in eternal relationships the Eternal God must be present. After all, He Himself taught that without Him we can do nothing. (John 15:5). And without Him it is not interesting.

Questions for Reflection on This Chapter

1. Please read: Rev. 3:20; Amos 3:3; Matt. 18:18-20; John 13:34-35, 15:4-5; 17:3,26; Luke 11:9-10; 1 Thess. 5:16-23; Jer. 29:11-13; Eph. 3:16-21; Num. 6:22-27; 1 Pet. 1:22 in light of this topic.

2. What did you understand from this topic?
3. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
4. Is it worth asking God for blessing on mutual love and friendship?
5. Is it customary in your society to pray for blessing on love for one another?
6. Is it possible to love one another without God's blessing?
7. How long will our love for one another last if Christ is not in it?
8. Does something happen in the invisible world after my prayer about love, even if I feel nothing?
9. Is Jesus standing at the door of our love and friendship, and is He waiting for our invitation into these relationships to enter and sup with us?
10. What should I do if I can pray about friendship, but don't want to be friends?
11. Are you ready to love and be a friend to the one whom the Lord will give you?
12. Can it be that I decide to love a friend and ask for God's blessing on this, and then realize that we do not suit each other for friendship? And what then to do?
13. What will Jesus do with us in our love for one another when we invite Him into these relationships?
14. Is there a probability that in love for one another we will love one another from a pure heart?
15. And what will happen to our friendship if we do not ask for God's blessings on it?

The Fruit of the Spirit in Friendship

We read in Eph. 5:8-9: "For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth)."

We read further in Gal. 5:22-23: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law."

When I read and reread these verses, I noticed that "fruit" is written in the singular, and I could not imagine what it should look like. Probably something similar to an orange, where there are many segments in one fruit, and each segment is a special substance. I always wanted to be a fruitful Christian. In communication with people I tried to produce this fruit, but it was unclear to me how this is done. And then I abandoned these efforts and began to simply live. An orange tree does not need to try to prove something to someone. It simply bears oranges because it is an orange tree. The peculiarity of the fruit of the Spirit is that it ripens on a tree under the common name "Love." This is one of the names of God, and without Him we can do nothing.

Once my wife asked me in winter to bring her branches from some tree. I did not understand what she wanted to do with this. She put these branches in water and after some time fresh green leaves appeared on them, and then flowers. It was so joyful to have a spring mood in winter. And then these branches withered even though we often changed the water for them. I so hoped that the flowers would ripen and begin to transform into fruit. After this I cut branches with fruit ovaries and observed whether they could bear fruit in a vase. But everything ended with them withering and giving no fruit.

I also noticed that the fruit of each plant ripens at a certain time. Not earlier and not later.

Love for one another is a tree in God's garden, which is grafted to one common Root named Jesus, from Whom the plant takes all its juices to develop properly. Living in Christ, we simply

find each other and decide to give each other love, grafting our relationship to the True Vine. In Jesus there is a lot of juice that nourishes us with its life-giving power and brings into our mutual love a special taste and interesting experiences. My friend and I do not plan to bring anything into this world, but time passes, and we notice that an interesting fruit grows on the branches of our friendship tree, and then much fruit. And it is so fragrant and tasty! We look and marvel. It seems we are not trying to produce something, but simply love each other from a pure heart and ask the Lord to bless these relationships, and then rejoice that we exist for each other, and that there is peace and harmony between us. We are in no hurry in our love and friendship and are set to carry it through all our life, taking it with us into Eternity. For such a long period special longsuffering is needed, and it exists, and we do not even worry that we will need to be friends for a very long time and love each other.

In our relationship there is also mutual kindness. From morning to evening we think of how to please each other, so that everyone feels very good from this. To do good to the one you love is not difficult at all, or rather, it is impossible not to do it.

Mercy has so permeated our hearts in our friendship that we are ready to live with this in our love, and we are also ready to share this with all who wish. How else? How not to show mercy to the one you love? Love covers everything and finds its justification for everything that can happen.

We believe that Jesus blesses us in our relationships, because we dedicated ourselves to Him, asked about this, and see how He answers and nourishes us with His life-giving juices. We believe that having begun this good work in us, the Lord will perfect it until the day of His Coming. And even during the greatest trials and the greatest tribulation we will continue to love each other and develop our relationships, if circumstances do not separate us. And in Eternity no one will prevent us from continuing to build our love and friendship further.

In our friendship there is also meekness in relationships. We so tenderly and carefully study each other in search of treasures of

the soul that we are afraid to touch those places where there are injuries from past battles. Our meekness in love helps us to be restrained and delicate, not to go where it is not allowed, and not to raise in communication what causes pain and causes harm. We patiently wait for permission to receive each other and sincerely rejoice that we always turn out to be needed and desired for each other. Meekness helps to show restraint in many matters and to be lenient toward each other's mistakes, covering everything with mutual forgiveness and love.

In our friendship there is also self-control from everything that can harm our relationships or destroy them, but at the same time moderate use of those qualities of the soul that we abundantly share with each other. We respect the freedom of choice and expression of will of our friend and do not insist on doing good to each other against our wishes. Respect for each other is always present in our relationships, and we value this very much.

The righteousness of Jesus covers our relationships and makes them pure and perfect. At first we were afraid to tell each other about our love, but then we saw that God does not forbid doing this, and we began to practice this manner of speech. And you know, it turns out to express love not only in deeds and motives, but also in words. And all this brings mutual joy and warms our hearts. The righteousness of Christ makes our relationships holy and right. We always compare ourselves with Him and ask: "Lord, is this right, is this possible, is this decent?" God's law determines the boundaries of our happiness, within which we can calmly develop.

And when we in love and truth bear much fruit, then we are not under law, but under grace. The Lord keeps us from all evil and protects our relationships from various temptations and attacks from outside.

The Holy Spirit produces in us those very necessary transformations when we make the decision to love each other and build our further life on this foundation, and we invite Christ into these relationships. We do not make efforts to bear the fruit of the Spirit, but simply love each other in simplicity of

heart and have fellowship with each other. And then we see how such beautiful clusters have grown on the branches of our union, which are pleasant not only to us, but also to all our friends and acquaintances. And they themselves guess that we are disciples of Jesus, because we have love among ourselves.

Our friendship has a prophetic foundation and originates from God's commandment, and then is offered by Christ in the message to Laodicea as gold refined by fire, as a means to emerge from the lukewarm state and enrich one's life with new experiences and abundance of fruit.

We do not know how to love each other and do not know how to be friends correctly, but once having embarked on this path, we allow the Holy Spirit to teach us this science and produce in us both to will and to do according to His good pleasure.

Questions for Reflection on This Chapter

1. Please read: Ps. 1:1-3; Rom. 6:22; Phil. 2:13; Matt. 5:3-12; Eph. 4:23-25; 1 Pet. 1:22; Gal. 6:9-10; Prov. 17:17; 23:23; 25:15; 27:9; John 13:34-35; 15:1-9,26; 16:13; 1 Tim. 1:5; 2 Tim. 2:22; 1 Thess. 4:9 in light of this topic.
2. What did you understand from this topic?
3. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
4. Do you understand the expression "fruit of the Spirit"? What is it?
5. Is the formation of my character only my life task, or does Someone else participate in this process?
6. Do you think there is something in love for one another that is built by God?
7. How do I determine whether my friend and I love each other?
8. Can I by my desire and effort produce the fruit of the Holy Spirit?
9. To love one another—is this knowledge and skill necessary to seek and develop, or does it come by itself as I grow in faith?
10. Does God's plan for the last time include my love for a friend? If yes, where is it written about?

11. What does mutual love do with people? What does it prepare them for?
12. But can it be that I will strive all my life for love with a friend, but will never experience this joy?
13. Do you have such a friend with whom you love each other and see the fruit of the Holy Spirit in your relationship?
14. If I have the fruit of the Spirit in other types of ministry, do I need to love someone else?
15. Do you know how to love your friend?

Infatuation and Love

He and she looked at each other and realized that, finally, they had met the one they had dreamed about for so long. Not long ago they had crossed the threshold of their majority and felt quite independent. Their believing parents gave them freedom in making decisions, which led them to a reassessment of values, and the young people began to arrange their own lives and build their personal relationships with God.

And then one fine day he and she noticed each other at one of the youth congresses and realized that this meeting was not accidental, and the one who looked so intently and cheerfully into their eyes was the long-awaited answer to the prayer of faith. They were drawn to each other as if by a magnet, and they realized that love at first sight exists, and now something very important and significant is happening.

Relying on their feelings and intuition, they decided to develop relationships and in common prayer asked God to bless their friendship. Time ceased to exist for them. They could talk for hours about everything in the world, believing that this soul celebration would never end, and why should it, because they love each other.

One day he decided to carefully take her hand in his, and she with childlike trust allowed her beloved to do this. Something like an electric current passed through their bodies, and they felt so good in this innocent touch that they decided from now on to spend time with each other exactly this way. Even during prayer the young people did not want to let go of each other, and the joy from such closeness overflowed their young and pure hearts.

Once they gathered courage and came to her church holding hands, which attracted the attention of all parishioners, especially her friends. He turned out to be an interesting interlocutor and during the Sabbath school lesson discussion sometimes let go of her hand to open the needed place in the Bible.

He and she were so attuned to each other that they created around their relationship a large fence so that no one could interfere in their inner world and sow something unkind or express their opinion about their friendship. They were ready to defend their relationship by any means and did not allow suspicious brethren near them. Although no one tried to prevent them from being friends, they still caught different looks at themselves. Someone looked at them with a smile, someone expressed unconcealed regret, and some friends asked when the wedding would be.

They began to seriously think that creating a family would be a wise decision for them, and living together would allow them to lawfully do what they so passionately desired, but restrained themselves, understanding that rushing events was wrong.

And then the day came when he decided to take the next step and, embracing his girlfriend, confidently kissed her on the lips. Both of them felt a slight dizziness, and they no longer wanted to part ever. As if enchanted, they pressed against each other, understanding only that this was true love, and they were simply created for each other. She closed her eyes from pleasure and with childlike trust allowed herself to be kissed further, joyfully responding in kind. She felt his hands stroking her back, but subconsciously made sure that they did not go below the waist, gently correcting them when this line was violated.

Their relationship entered a new stage. Holding hands no longer pleased their hearts so much, and they decided to always walk embracing to show others how happy they are, and from time to time exchanged kisses to strengthen their friendship with this. And when such pastime became the norm for them, they decided to demonstrate their love for each other also in the circle of their friends, and then in church, tenderly holding each other by the waist, but deciding not to kiss in public, although their loving looks at each other made it clear to everyone that the wedding would be soon.

Someone advised them to undergo premarital counseling, to which they dryly gave their consent, although they understood

that their feelings for each other were so strong and constant, and their attachment so strong, that extra advice would be unnecessary for them.

And so they came to a meeting with the pastor, who began to ask them serious questions that disconcerted them and put them in a dead end. They realized that they knew each other very poorly, but their mutual love covered this insignificant shortcoming, and they answered all questions with cheerfulness, unequivocally assuring their mentor that not everything he told them was so important, because they love each other so much. And they had only one question for the pastor: "When can he marry them?" But, understanding that before the end of premarital counseling they had no chance, they decided to go through this formal procedure and joyfully waited for the moment when they could finally say to the whole world the long-awaited "Yes. Yes."

At the next meeting, she decided to sit on her friend's lap to be closer to him in their embrace. They felt so good with each other in such pastime that they lost track of time, and their hands no longer knew any boundaries and increasingly delighted their hearts with their accidental but pleasant caresses. They loved each other so much that they no longer had barriers in their personal space, but some invisible force restrained their feelings, suggesting that they should wait a little and not develop before the wedding what they so wanted to try in order to be even more strengthened in mutual love.

Finally, they were given the go-ahead for their union, and this became the main restraining criterion of their intimacy. They joyfully decided to wait for this celebration, so that later they could continue the relationship as they wanted.

But our friends had friends who also once met each other, but decided not to touch each other until they understood how much they suited each other, and whether there was God's approval of their relationship. They prayed much for each other, read books together about creating a family and raising children, looked for those who could give them wise advice for building family happiness. Short meetings at premarital

counseling lessons were not enough for them, and they looked for new people who could share with them their life experience and tell them what a happy family should be, and what it should not be. All valuable thoughts and advice were written down in a notebook, so that later they could discuss all this together and give it to God in prayer. They were in no hurry with the wedding day, understanding that everything should be wise and have God's blessing. They liked to communicate with each other, but at the same time they did not abandon other things, joyfully fulfilling their daily duties.

When they were asked about their wedding, they modestly said that they still knew each other poorly and did not want to make a mistake by getting ahead of events.

The time of their friendship became for them a time of fasting and prayer. They very much wanted to have the approval of God, parents and the church. Although they had personal sympathy for each other, they understood that feelings are not a very reliable advisor, and therefore decided to approach their friendship soberly.

Questions for Reflection on This Chapter

1. Please read: Gen. 3:7; 6:1-5; 24:2-4,11-14,19-21,58-61; 29:10-12; Prov. 6:20-25; Heb. 13:21; Eph. 3:16-19; Rev. 14:4; Rom. 8:14; 1 John 4:11 in light of this topic.
2. What did you understand from this topic?
3. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
4. What is infatuation?
5. Have you ever been in love? Did it feel good?
6. How long does that first feeling last that draws you to another person?
7. Does the Bible prohibit infatuation?
8. Do you think wisdom from above is needed for choosing a life partner?
9. Will it be right to rely on one's feelings when choosing a candidate for creating a family?
10. Should one consider one's sympathies and feelings when choosing a life partner, or should one be guided only by principle?

11. Is it worth building a relationship if there are no feelings, and they do not come even with close communication?
12. What does wisdom consist of when creating a family?
13. What is the difference between love and infatuation?
14. What should be done if someone, being married, falls in love with another person, and cannot get rid of these feelings? Is this bad?
15. What happens to those who create families relying only on their feelings?

Infatuation

What is infatuation? Is it something bad or good? Can it be controlled?

Let us first separate infatuation from infatuation so as not to confuse these two different concepts.

The world offers us its version of infatuation, promoting it through all media and cultural sources of information. This stable influence has formed in us a certain way of thinking and a certain understanding of this feeling.

But there is also God's view of this peculiarity of the human soul, which helps to understand what is happening in a person, and what a blessing it can be.

Let us consider God's way.

Infatuation is God's gift to the human heart, which the Lord placed in us in His image and likeness at creation. Like any other gift, infatuation is a natural God's blessing for every person, to adorn our life, delight hearts, unite us in strong unions of friendship and love. It is an adornment for any communication and can quickly find the necessary words and perform amazing acts just like that, from the whole soul. It is the most powerful stimulus and interesting motive for convincing another person of one's sincere desire to become his close friend.

Infatuation is conceived in our communication with each other as a starter of love, which is very small compared to the world ocean of God's Agape, but it naturally introduces the heart into this endless space and retains its properties of inspiration to periodically renew established relationships. But you cannot go far on a starter.

Infatuation is a combination of visual and auditory contact, biochemical processes of the organism, mental perception and spiritual values directed at a specific person who caused sympathy in my mind. And now in more detail. My worldview, which began to form from birth, created in my heart an image

of the beautiful and good. The culture and mentality of the society in which I grew up endowed me with spiritual values that taught me to define the good and beautiful. And when I meet this image in the face of my neighbor, then biochemical processes begin to come into action, which inject into my organism corresponding hormones that affect my mood, perception of reality, world feeling and desires. My mind connects to the ongoing processes, forming certain proposals, analyzes all the pros and cons, makes a conclusion and transmits this package to my will, which gives the go-ahead for the continuation and development of further relationships or blocks these thoughts and feelings at the very beginning of their maturation, standing up for the defense of my spiritual values and priorities.

All this happens inside a person very quickly with harmonious interaction according to those spiritual criteria that are the driving or restraining force of my human nature.

Is infatuation something temporary, or is it something stable? This question is difficult to answer unambiguously. Everything depends on the culture of the person and the situation in which this property began to manifest and develop itself. It can flare up and grow into a strong principle, or it can fade away without leaving a trace.

The problem of incorrect understanding of what infatuation is as God's gift can be found in my heart corrupted by the world. God did not endow us with what would become a curse for us, but if any God's blessing is taken to the extreme, it will be called sin.

The enemy of the soul has taken the sensual nature of man as a weapon and has taken care that these lower forces of man's nature should control the higher forces—reason and will. In such a perverted subordination, sin is inevitable.

In our organism there is an interesting hormone dopamine, which actively affects the pleasure center in the human brain. At the top of the lower forces of the soul are infatuation, appetite, sexual attraction, craving for the novelty of

discoveries and social relationships. These are natural internal stimulators that delight our heart thanks to hormonal dopamine stimulation. Dopamine does not create pleasure for me, but stimulates me to seek pleasure. It also has the name: "molecule of addiction." And the opioid system, when I get what I want, produces in the mind a feeling of satisfaction and pleasure. And addiction can bring me to the state of madly wanting to receive pleasure. When dopamine creates a very persistent call to action, then my mind begins to analyze how best to embody what is desired and present it to the will in the right spirit. If this hormone were absent, we would lose interest in food, in reproduction, in communication and would become who knows what, not knowing why we live. It is interesting to note that when there is satiation with natural pleasures, my opioid system is depleted, and I lose interest in many good and useful things, and my memory remembers the first sensations of euphoria and begins to provoke me to unnatural stimulators of pleasure, producing an excessive amount of dopamine in the process. As a result, my flesh finds artificial substitutes for the lower forces to satisfy my emotional and spiritual needs. These substitutes can become exciting unhealthy food and drinks, alcohol, drugs, computer games, changing partners, masturbation and other offers from Satan's arsenal.

If I do not understand the biochemical relationship of my mind with feelings and thoughts, then many internal things can begin to control my will and impose on me carnal pleasures as something inevitable.

Hollywood has tried very hard and has imposed on the world its concept of infatuation. And this model of relationships between the sexes has imperceptibly penetrated into God's church, imposing its values as the norm of life. A conflict of interests has resulted, which is simply impossible to resolve peacefully. Someone wants to live according to the Hollywood model, considering it a romantic blessing, and someone becomes an opponent of all feelings, believing that principle and law should be in the first place, and love will come itself as a consequence of obedience.

As a result, we see hasty marriages that fall apart as quickly as they were created, or unhappy families that exist according to the principle of law, where spouses never understand when the long-awaited feelings will come. Of course, in both cases there are exceptions, where a hasty family or principled brethren find love for each other. And this is presented to us as an example of a working model.

I think that playing the lottery when creating a family is the most tragic thing that can become a catastrophe not only for two, but also for their offspring and close environment.

The mind must not only control my feelings, but also have wisdom to use this gift of Heaven so that everything contributes to my happiness and the happiness of those with whom I come into contact, without causing harm and temptations.

The Lord made everything in us perfect and beautiful, and now wants to teach us to manage this correctly and receive pleasure, delighting the Creator with our happiness.

Questions for Reflection on This Chapter

1. Please read: Eccl. 3:11-13; 7:29; 44:3; Ps. 138:13-17; Prov. 15:7; Song 1:1-3; 2:9-14; 4:7; 6:10; 1 Cor. 15:33; Matt. 7:16-20; Rev. 14:8 in light of this topic.
2. What did you understand from this topic?
3. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
4. Is infatuation something good?
5. What is the difference between infatuation and lust? Is there a difference?
6. Do you understand what mechanisms of the body come into action when a person falls in love?
7. Can infatuation be eternal?
8. Do you think we will fall in love with each other in Heaven? Or is this the lot only of earthly beings?
9. What do you understand from the expression "infatuation never passes"?
10. Until what age is it allowed to fall in love?
11. Is it worth creating a family with someone toward whom there are no feelings?

12. Can one create in oneself a feeling of infatuation, or should this come naturally?
13. What is the strength and beauty of infatuation?
14. Has anyone ever fallen in love with you? How did you realize it? And what did you feel?
15. Is it possible to fall in love with one person many times?

The Power of Infatuation

Infatuation is one of those feelings that can outpace my higher powers of the soul and determine my perception of my neighbor. If the mind agrees with the resulting image and finds it useful and good, then this feeling begins to strengthen and develop.

It is worth noting that feelings and control over them cannot be the same in different age periods and differ greatly from each other in five, fifteen and fifty-year-old people. And what is clear to me at 50 can be a difficult task at 15.

Any God's gift is pure in its nature and implies the most correct goals and objectives. Nothing in my body was conceived for curse and misfortune. But sin came into the world and began to pervert everything, acting contrary to God's laws. My human nature decided to become an ally of God's enemy and embody in life what destroys my soul, but can bring temporary pleasure. The enemy of the soul took my lust of the flesh and lust of the eyes and called them love. He began to impose on the whole world his model of behavior, giving it a romantic appearance and intimate coloring. The carnal nature of man supported this view of life and quickly adapted to such an attitude between people. And to strengthen this base feeling at its height, it was given the name "love at first sight." To love a person pleasant to you is not a sin, to fall in love with him at first sight and love him forever is wonderful when you have a pure heart and a pure source of thoughts, which is based on Christ. However, to mask its destructive properties, the carnal nature appropriates God's names and presents its abominations as good and benefit for the soul.

Let's talk about appetite. This is a wonderful property that delights the heart at the sight or thought of healthy food. Where then did gluttony and satiation come from, which have become the curse of the age?

Sexuality is God's gift and plan for beautiful relationships within the family. But we see corruption, lust and perversions

from all sides, and such a spirit penetrates even into the life of believers.

Infatuation has also not escaped the attacks of the evil one, and therefore it should be separated from the worldly and purified from defilement, so as not to perceive this God's gift as a source of many troubles.

Infatuation is not agape love, but it is like the tip of a sharp needle, which can quickly penetrate into the most inaccessible places of the human soul and bring with it the connecting threads of God's love, which will unite lonely hearts in a strong union of love and friendship. And in some cases, infatuation even contributes to the creation of beautiful family relationships.

When I was sewing on a sewing machine and discovering the secrets of this science, I found that sewing needles have different thicknesses, and for each type of fabric a certain needle size is needed. There are also needles with a round tip so as not to tear the sewing fabric, but gently bypass the threads without damaging them with their point. Such stitches are good because if you make a mistake, you can undo the seam without finding damage to the fabric, and sew it again. Also, God's gift of infatuation has a very gentle tip, which entering someone else's life, does not destroy it and does not tear the neighbor's soul to pieces, but skillfully makes seams, fastening hearts with true love. And if the seam is wrong, it can always be undone and sewn in another place.

If infatuation was directed at the wrong person, whose appearance does not correspond to the content, then the mind receives the necessary command and blocks further actions of love, so as not to waste heavenly resources in vain. Jesus taught us not to give holiness and pearls to those who can do us evil through this.

Infatuation is very selective, and over the years it acquires special strength, having experience of past victories and retreats. It can fall in love many, many times with a beloved person to bring special joy to his soul, using the entire arsenal

of good thoughts and feelings, giving hormonal coloring to its actions, which brings indescribable pleasure to the infatuated heart and adorns the life of the beloved friend.

If we take as a basis that we are created in the image and likeness of God, then the conclusion immediately follows that God has infatuation and is capable of falling in love. It is not for me to decide how He does this, but I am glad that He perfectly understands what is happening to me when I fall in love and seek opportunities to share this gift with the object of my sympathy. I think that in this gift the Lord put a special sense of humor, so that together with His good angels He could admire how His children in purity of heart study each other, build strong relationships and bind themselves with strong bonds of heart attachment, rejoicing that they have found each other and can move on to more serious relationships.

At some point of infatuation, my will decides to ascend to a higher level of relationships and begins to make a choice to love a person and reveal his heart precisely at this level. Such a transition may not have deep awareness, but is able to automatically lead me to love in relationships, if the heart is taught to love. Also, infatuation does not die in this process, but goes into waiting mode, in order to attack from around the corner at the right time and deliver much joy with its unexpected lunges.

I do not plan how and when to fall in love, but when I hear this call of the heart and see the purity of thoughts, then I allow these good feelings to manifest themselves in useful action, which I rejoice in myself and delight the heart of a friend.

The prospect of infatuation with God is very pleasant to me. This is something abstract in description, but effective in relationships. Infatuation cannot be planned and predicted. I cannot say that tomorrow at 10:00 I will manifest myself in another bout of feelings. All this comes naturally and sometimes unconsciously, to quickly accomplish what I will not have enough wisdom or strength for. I cannot plan my infatuation with God, but I am able to tune my heart to this and ask the Lord to bless me in this feeling and reveal Himself to me as One

in Whom I could truly fall in love. I think He will be pleased to hear about such plans, and He will certainly help.

When I live and work in a community of like-minded people, then I get to know people closer, and my heart can choose the one who is pleasant to me and especially close in spirit and character traits. In such acquaintance with people, infatuation becomes an inevitable phenomenon and manifests itself from the best side, avoiding errors of ignorance. The person has been comprehensively tested, examined, identified as reliable, and as a gift for his humanity, he has the right to receive God's gift of my special attitude toward him.

It is difficult to determine how long infatuation lasts, and where it transitions into love, or where it ends. In some cases, it is like rocking on waves, now at the peak of its manifestation, now going into waiting mode, to raise its head again and fall upon its neighbor. And in some case it runs into an impregnable wall and decides not to take it by storm, but quietly leaves.

Questions for Reflection on This Chapter

1. Please read: Gen. 1:26-27; 29:17-18; Eccl. 3:11; 1 Sam. 18:1-3,20,28-29; Esth. 2:17; Mark 10:21; Song 1:12-16; 2:2-3,16; 4:7; 5:10,16; John 14:21; 1 John 4:7; 3 John 1:2; Rom. 9:25-26; Eph. 5:1; Mark 1:11; 9:7 in light of this topic.
2. What did you understand from this topic?
3. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
4. Have you begun to look at infatuation differently after these lessons?
5. Can you now distinguish carnal infatuation from infatuation and not confuse them with each other?
6. What words can be used to call carnal infatuation differently?
7. Why did the Lord give people this gift?
8. Is it worth being careful, understanding that you are falling in love with someone you like?
9. Can infatuation grow into agape?
10. Are you not confused in the definition that infatuation is not agape, but it can transition into it?

11. What should I do if I have not yet fallen in love with anyone, and do not understand what this is about?
12. Can a person program himself for infatuation?
13. What should you do if you have fallen in love after all? Is it worth fighting this?
14. If I notice that my good feelings incline me to lustful thoughts, then how should I understand such a gift from God?
15. Is it necessary to have a head to manage one's feelings?

Hollywood Infatuation

The world in which I live has its influence on me and on my thinking. If we are constantly told about what we should accept, then in the end we begin to believe in it or treat it loyally as the norm of life. The enemy of the soul has taken this tactic as a weapon and successfully implements it in the life of society.

The evil one does not stop in his achievements in seduction and has learned to convince us of the most insane things. Various psychologists and philosophers have become Satan's tool through which completely godless ideas are transmitted to the world as immutable laws or something needed for earthly happiness.

Our world is a non-stop mechanism for the development of humanity according to rules and laws established by people. Initially, this process was based on God's statutes, but sin entered the world and began to dominate in its influence on all spheres of society's life. However, to be successful, the enemy of the soul decided to present himself to the world as an angel of light, and humanity supported this deception.

Hollywood is a district in the city of Los Angeles (USA), in which the largest number of film studios is concentrated and traditionally the largest number of famous artists reside. It so happened that this name has become a symbol of the entire world film industry.

Cinema has an influence on the human mind because it offers a visual embodiment of all kinds of ideas, and the skillful acting of actors convinces us that their way of life is not so bad.

Pleasant personalities of attractive appearance, refined behavior of actors, well-trained voices, impeccable makeup, sincerity in behavior—all this the eye sees and perceives the main characters as an example to follow. The law of contemplation states that we are transformed into what we behold. If I do not choose what is useful, then the evil one will offer me his menu, which will be to the taste of my carnal

nature, and it will convince me that sin is good if it brings pleasure and enjoyment.

Sex, violence, deception, hostility, fraud and murder have become Hollywood's traditional script. And all this has unhindered entry into our homes under the guise of modern art.

Infatuation as God's gift has adorned the sinful state of the world and in conjunction with God's plan of salvation offers people a wonderful way to establish strong relationships in love and friendship. It has a direct connection with the thoughts and feelings of a person and connects to its manifestation also physiological processes that bring pleasure and enjoyment to the soul.

Hollywood is Satan's factory for perverting all God's values and convincingly imposing a sinful way of life as the best alternative.

Constant repetition of lawlessness creates a firm and stable model of imitation on the part of viewers. Producers have noticed that after the presentation of new films, commodity demand for things and household accessories advertised in films increases. There is also imitation of the behavior of actors, their attitude to life and even their way of thinking.

A nice artist with pleasant character traits and a joyful view of life sincerely opens his soul to me in the film, letting me into his intimate sphere and sharing with me the secrets of his heart. I involuntarily fall in love with this image and, beholding it, begin to imitate it. I know this actor from the inside and begin to justify any of his sins, because I fell in love with the picture imposed on me. And when my favorite hero meets such a nice partner who represents the standard of perfection in all respects, then I really want them to unite in a common union of two hearts, because they are so nice. And the script of the film ends exactly as I need to imagine. Happy end—this is the goal and success of any film. My carnal nature begins to convince me that the actors' performance will bring similar happiness into my life, and I begin to look for it in my life.

Let's look at the general picture of Hollywood infatuation. He and she met each other, looked, fell in love, embraced, and then they are already in a common bed showing us the romantic continuation of their "love" or at best the details remain behind the scenes, but everything is clear to everyone, and in the most acceptable version the heroes get married. Of course, there is an exception to this model, but the main direction looks exactly like this.

I watch this and remember. I am surrounded by living people. And here is someone I liked, and I liked him. We met and began to communicate. But I was not taught at school how to build relationships, and at home they did not tell me the principles of a happy family. My upbringing was done by Hollywood. And what happens? I act as my favorite actor taught me. My feelings are at the peak of euphoria, I am happy, and I feel "invincible," I have found what I dreamed about for so long, following the Hollywood script. But days pass, my infatuation evaporates, and I realized that I hurried and made a mistake, but I do not give up, understanding that I have not yet met the right person, and I set off on new searches. And even marriage does not become an obstacle to me, the main thing is to find that companion with whom I will be truly happy, like my favorite hero from the film. And all my friends think the same and share their exploits with me. And society approves of my behavior, adjusting its laws to me. But happiness still does not come. The celebration of the novelty of relationships quickly ends, even if it lasts a long time, and emptiness comes, awareness of uselessness and worthlessness. Years go by, but there is no future. And if my romantic acquaintances have gifted me with new incurable diseases, then I don't even know how to live on. Why didn't they show me in the film the real continuation and sad consequences? Whom to blame for what I brought into my life with my own hands? But Hollywood thinking has not died, and I believe in the pink dream, although I have already taken off the rose-colored glasses. And seeing the next rakes on my path, I boldly go to meet them, thinking: "What if, this time I'll be lucky," because I know many film artists who are simply happy

in their films. And I also want to live. I will not give up, but I will get what I was taught.

God offers the world His model of relationships, which does not change over the years and remains surprisingly stable and functioning. Although some people want to improve and adorn God's principles with modern reality, truth remains truth and does not change its principles, firmly passing through all times.

The strongest structure is a pyramid. It will withstand everything and remain unshakable. This is very similar to God's principles. But Hollywood turned this construction upside down with the base on top and imposed it on the world, where it proposes to start with what should be at the end. And the world picked up this madness and began to build this way, dreaming of erecting eternal happiness.

If the foundation of a house is unreliable, then the whole structure will be wrong. But cinema does not teach us this. They will simply go bankrupt if they allow themselves to deviate from the carnal script.

And is my damaged mind still capable of perceiving what God offers? Is it worth my while to study something and build among my ruins? I'll try, what if it works? I believe it will work!

Questions for Reflection on This Chapter

1. Please read: 1 John 2:16-17; Gal. 5:17-23; Ps. 9:24; James 1:13-17; 1 Pet. 1:14; 2:11-12; Phil. 2:13; Rev. 18:23; 2 Pet. 2:17-19; Jude 1:16; Rom. 1:21-32; 6:11-16; Col. 3:5-7; Titus 2:11-13; 3:3-6 in light of this topic.
2. What did you understand from this topic?
3. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
4. Have you experienced the influence of Hollywood that is discussed in this lesson? If yes, share your experience.
5. Is everything so bad in the world of cinema? Maybe there are good films there?
6. Have you ever been influenced by Hollywood values?
7. How many films per week can I safely watch so as not to damage my mind?

8. Do you think that the sin that I let into my mind through watching films will be only my personal problem?
9. Can I quickly get rid of all that garbage with which I have filled my mind throughout my life?
10. Do you consider Hollywood a dangerous territory, or can people strong in faith safely be there?
11. Do you like "Christian" films about love?
12. How should correct relationships develop in people who are in love with each other?
13. Does Hollywood have its influence only on single and unbelieving people, or does it also affect family and believers?
14. What should I do if I understand the truth with my mind and agree with it, but my carnal nature wants to live by different concepts?
15. Will God's love be able to restore my heart destroyed by the world?

Chapter 17. Oh, Those Hormones!

Even the purest and most beautiful feeling has an effect on the body's physiology. When a person experiences joy or pleasure, a surge of hormones directly affects the pleasure center and opioid system located in the brain. We should also bear in mind that the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms are always nearby, watching each of us very closely.

The company of two people of the opposite sex is an area where extreme caution must be exercised, without becoming overconfident or relying on one's own strength and principles. Within each of us, the enemy of our souls has an ally called the "carnal nature," which will never die as long as we live in this world. This carnal man is dangerous to me because he lives within me and often offers himself as the master of my will. Even when my will belongs to Christ and relies completely on the saving power of my Lord, the old man, although "pinned to the ground," always keeps his ugly head ready to rise and attack my will if I loosen my grip and let him go for even a moment.

Unfortunately, the sad history of the fall of many strong people begins within themselves. If I willingly place myself in an environment that gives my carnal nature an opportunity to manifest itself, there is no guarantee that I will withstand this trial and remain steadfast to the end.

The companionship of two principled people who care deeply about each other can become a fierce battlefield against their carnal inclinations if they allow their feelings to govern their actions.

Hormones such as dopamine, endorphins, serotonin, testosterone, and adrenaline have a certain influence on the emotional state of the mind and can very quickly bring a person into a state of euphoria and blissful pleasure. The holiness of a believer's principles does not deprive that person of feelings and emotional experiences. Hormones work actively from within and perform their usual functions when the brain gives

the command. The eyes can instantly move ahead of the will and quickly bypass protective barriers, activating the hormonal centers of rapid response. And when analytical thinking finally becomes involved, a person's will may already be completely subject to pleasant feelings and may have no desire to leave that state. Drug addiction, for example, is a vivid illustration of hormonal power over the human will.

Two believers of the opposite sex falling in love with each other is beautiful in itself and brings special experiences into their lives. They find and set aside the best time for each other, take joy in building their relationship, pray for one another, and may even organize joint projects or make common plans for life. God watches over these souls, revealing each person's character to the other. All their feelings remain under the control of reason, and they look at their close relationship with a clear mind.

But a moment comes in their friendship when one of them deliberately decides to touch the other and see what happens. He lovingly takes her hand, and she allows him to do so, or the other way around. As soon as this contact occurs, the body immediately reacts and releases the corresponding hormones into the bloodstream. Depending on the depth of the friends' emotional connection, their feelings may very actively suppress reason and produce an almost magical pleasure. Not every touch causes such a reaction. If it happens on crowded public transportation during rush hour, the body may respond calmly to a friend's touch. But when these people touch each other while alone, entirely different feelings arise.

And how pleasant is that first kiss before marriage when it is welcomed rather than resisted! How much sensual joy it brings, and how Hollywood loves to portray it! This is where the most interesting, and sometimes the saddest, part begins. The Bible does not directly prohibit kissing, and therefore the sons and daughters of God sometimes practice it without waiting until marriage. While holding hands may bring joy to the heart and the will may still retain control over the feelings, a kiss breaks down barriers, and emotions lead the body into a world of sensations, rewarding the couple with special joy and pleasure.

The pleasure center receives a rapid and abundant surge of hormones, bringing the mind into a state of euphoria. The carnal nature immediately joins in, suggesting that the experience should continue and be repeated. The next kiss is no longer quite as sweet, but it is still very pleasant, and refusing another kiss may eventually be interpreted as a rejection of the relationship, which neither person wants to damage.

However this description may sound, it reflects a reality of our time that shifts the focus from getting to know each other rationally to the realm of feelings and emotional experiences. At best, these experiences do not develop into very intimate relationships outside marriage, but they still suppress the will and give control to the feelings.

A person who has become addicted to sensual pleasure finds it very difficult to analyze another person's behavior and discover the beauty and diversity of that person's inner qualities, recognizing both virtues and possible faults and shortcomings.

Not all friends are suitable for each other as marriage partners, but sensual pleasures put "rose-colored glasses" on those who are in love. They see their relationship as a celebration that will last a lifetime. And so these young people decide to build the house of their future happiness on the sand of their hormonal experiences.

The enemy of our souls knows perfectly well when to entangle those who lose their vigilance and enter dangerous territory with his enchantments. He cannot force people to sin, but he can tempt them to try something that does not seem particularly dangerous at first glance, and then to try it again and again. Unfortunately, feelings are not the only things capable of suppressing a person's will and reason. The enemy of our souls also has the power and ability to bewitch people who are in love when they cross ethical boundaries and decide to test their self-control, believing that they can stop at any moment and return to the original, seemingly harmless situation. And married people who enter the enemy's territory already know the taste of intimacy and may be even more susceptible to his enchantments.

We are spiritual beings, and we can very quickly come under the influence of God's Spirit or a fallen spirit. We should never underestimate the power of spiritual deception when we enter forbidden territory.

But things are not so hopeless for those who establish reasonable boundaries in their relationships, are not afraid to discuss what is happening, and keep their feelings under the control of reason, trusting wholeheartedly in God's protection, even if they have already experienced hormonal pleasure. The brain tends to obey a person's will and can very quickly block many internal processes if that will turns to Heaven for help and asks God to protect the soul from falling and from evil influence.

Knowledge of ethical standards, the establishment of clear boundaries, understanding God's will, spiritual belonging to Christ, and a personal relationship with Him—all these things will protect the soul from evil and help a person see and accept a friend in the proper light, allowing a pure relationship to develop. Falling in love is innocent when it remains within the boundaries of God's will and common sense.

Questions for Reflection on This Chapter

1. Please read Matthew 18:7; Proverbs 3:5-6; 2 Samuel 13:1-2, 14-15; Matthew 14:6-7; 2 Corinthians 13:5; 1 Thessalonians 5:21-23; Ezekiel 36:26-32; Philippians 1:8-11; 2:5; Hebrews 5:11-14; Psalm 139:14, 23-24; Romans 1:21-24, 28 in light of this topic.
2. What have you understood from this topic?
3. What other Bible verses have come to your mind?
4. Do you understand the relationship between your thoughts, feelings, and desires?
5. Can a person control their feelings and thoughts, or should desires govern the mind?
6. What do we call those who allow their feelings and desires to dictate and impose a way of life upon them?
7. Do you believe that a believer is capable of keeping all their passions and lusts under control, or should physiological

processes be allowed to develop naturally according to circumstances?

8. What is the difference between love and lustful thoughts when hormones begin to influence the mind?
9. What should I do if my body's hormonal processes draw me toward an obvious sin that does not seem so terrible?
10. Do you believe that the enemy of our souls actively participates in all romantic experiences, trying through his enchantments to lead people into sin? Or are there some people over whom he has no such power?
11. Do you know any believers who began developing very intimate relationships before marriage? Are they still close and happy in those relationships today?
12. What should I do if abstinence brings me no pleasure, while I long so much for romance and sensual experiences, yet I am afraid that God will punish me?
13. Is widespread moral corruption a characteristic feature of the last days? Is it worth living by different rules? Or does God take a lenient view of such human behavior because, after all, this is the twenty-first century?
14. Does the word "sorceries" in Revelation 18:23 have anything to do with falling in love? "And the light of a candle shall shine no more at all in thee; and the voice of the bridegroom and of the bride shall be heard no more at all in thee: for thy merchants were the great men of the earth; for by thy sorceries were all nations deceived."
15. Does Heaven watch how people who are in love behave and what they do?

Love at First Sight

What do you hear when you are told about love at first sight? Is such a thing possible? What kind of love are we talking about? Is this not a mirage in the desert of sin, which beckons you with its romance, but never comes in your life? Or is it a beautiful rainbow, which very clearly shows all its spectra of colors in someone's life, but never achievable by you when you want to approach it?

There was a time in my life when I watched television programs, and I well remember the one that was called: "Love at First Sight." I believed that such a thing existed, that the heroes of this show were real, and I always rejoiced when young people successfully chose each other and won the main prize. It was very similar to market trading, where boys and girls evaluated each other as a commodity, asking different questions. The choice was small, three girls got acquainted with three guys whom they saw for the first time, and at the end of the poll everyone had to name the one they liked. If there was a match of sympathies, he and she chose each other, they were paid for a restaurant in which they had to get to know each other better and then on the next broadcast guess what the partner loves or does not love, and if a certain number of points was gained, then they could win a romantic trip for two. And I sat, as if spellbound, by the screen and believed in this "pink dream," thinking that here it is, happiness—you just need to go and take it.

And if you remember all those romantic films about how he and she found each other forever, which I managed to watch before meeting Jesus, then in my worldview a certain model of relationships was formed, which was so firmly established in my heart that I could not imagine anything else.

In light of what the world taught me, I also perceived Christian families, seeing how they are created according to the same principles, but with the condition that your chosen one be from the same denomination as you.

Although I already had a family before my repentance and rebirth, I always had an interest in the topic of happy marriage, and I am still not indifferent to the laws of this happiness. I strive to learn and accept them into my life, sharing with others.

In the Greek language, into which the books of the Old Testament were translated and the New was written, the word "love" has many different meanings and is not always the same, although it always relates to people. In Greek it sounds like erotica, love for a friend, love for family, love for homeland, Divine agape love, and these are completely different words that are translated into our language with one word "love." I would add there one more modern love for food products. There is a merging of all these meanings into one, and we can only guess whether it is about love for fish or for "little fish."

Love at first sight is attractive because it contains the word "love." Everyone can boldly put any Greek meaning in this place and believe that this is possible. But the big problem of God's people is that we do not know agape love in our life, we do not know its laws and therefore easily succumb to all kinds of deceptions and counterfeits of this love.

The enemy of the soul is interested in us believing in any love except that which God is. We are offered a beautiful soap bubble, impressing us with its size, symmetry and magical color overflows. We are fascinated by the force of surface tension of this bubble. We see with our own eyes that it is real, and we decide to make it ours.

In my life I have witnessed many marriage unions, I have also seen how some of them fell apart. And the main reason for divorces is that young people did not know the person with whom they were going to create a family, and did not strive for this knowledge even within the family. All romantic experiences and all their love at first sight burst like a soap bubble at the first trials, and instead of solving these problems on the spot and asking for love and wisdom from above, family members found other partners or decided to part.

Love at first sight is the evil one's lottery, where someone sometimes wins, and this is trumpeted everywhere, but where there are much more disappointed hearts and broken lives, and few speak about this. If I am accustomed to looking at the surface of relationships and do not try to understand what rocks are hidden in the depths, then sooner or later I will collide with these underwater trials, and my life will be shaken and tested.

Studying the science of agape love, seeing in it a direct connection with God and His prophecies for the last time, we discover for ourselves a new world of stable laws, statutes and principles. If I am asked about the existence of Agape at first sight, then I will not be able to answer this question unambiguously, understanding that those who have not yet known this love within themselves will not be able to have it and build something from it. Agape at first sight is possible if I understand its laws and principles and build my relationships with neighbors precisely on them. And if in the world love at first sight leads to cohabitation or hasty marriage, then agape is in no hurry to create a family union. It wants to comprehensively know the whole person and love him all life. It is not so much interested in marriage with a loved one as it is interested in the person himself. It can endlessly long study the soul of its chosen one, constantly making new discoveries and calmly overcoming all trials of relationships, building something solid and beautiful on the ruins of egoism.

Having once looked at a new candidate for its heart attachment, agape love makes a decision to love him always and under any conditions, despite trials in the future. It begins with the first sight and the decision to be eternal love for this person and can no longer change this choice, because He who is Love is incapable of loving otherwise.

The only problem that I can experience in such love may be that I, not having known it within myself, will decide that I possess it and love precisely with it, relying on my internal source of myself. But when I come to emptiness and internal burnout,

then I understand that I am nothing, and I can do everything only in the Lord who strengthens me.

God is not against sinners loving each other at first sight and building their houses on the sand of such myths. But He is against attributing His holy Name and power to this sensual love.

The Lord does not offer us a lottery game where only one receives the main prize. He invites us to accept His plan, delve into it and all become winners and sit with Him on His throne.

His love once begins in my life, to never end. Although it is complex in its structure, it is very strong and simple in handling. You can run after the rainbow all your life, never catching it, but losing all your strength on this squirrel wheel. And we are offered a reliable means for eternal relationships, which, having begun with my decision, will never end, but will constantly delight me with its victories and discoveries.

Questions for Reflection on This Chapter

1. Please read: Phil. 2:13; Matt. 24:12,37-39; 1 John 2:16-17; 3:1; 4:7-8; Jer. 31:3; James 3:12-18; John 13:34-35; 17:26; Eccl. 3:1,8; 1 Cor. 13:4-8 in light of this topic.
2. What did you understand from this topic?
3. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
4. What is love at first sight?
5. Do you believe that love at first sight exists, and it is the most beautiful event in the life of any person?
6. What is the difference between God's love and that which the world offers?
7. Do you remember your first love at first sight? Is your heart still burning?
8. Can I begin to call the activity of my hormones love?
9. How to understand where is real love from God, and where are my strong feelings and emotional experiences against the background of hormonal activity?
10. What should I do if I, being a single person, fell in love with someone at first sight and noticed the same attitude toward

myself? Is it worth developing these relationships or should they be feared like fire?

11. What should I do if someone fell in love with me at first sight, and I have no feelings for this person?
12. Is it possible to order your heart to love someone and not to love someone?
13. Is it worth suppressing in yourself the feeling of love at first sight if it has come and delights your heart?
14. Is it important to understand what my love is based on?
15. First love and love at first sight—are they the same thing?

Hasty Marriages

Our time is characterized by the fact that many things, services, and acquisitions have become quickly accessible. Everything that works faster and can serve a person with better quality enjoys enormous popularity and demand. We are ready to pay big money for fast services, and we want to earn big money quickly. And it creates the impression that we are flying somewhere, not understanding where we will arrive. The thinking of modern man is tuned to the instant receipt of all kinds of information and answers to all his questions.

Here and now—the motto of our time, which many corporations have adopted to quickly bring to life many of their fleeting desires and respond to imaginary needs. And if someone doesn't have the means to instantly achieve their dream, then there are credit companies that, at the expense of your subsequent labor, will give you a quick loan that you will be paying back for the rest of your remaining life.

Marriage and family have not escaped such influence of time and, as a consequence, we see sad statistics of the collapse of family unions or their deplorable state.

I have heard the following expression many times. A real man must do three things at least once in his life: build a house, plant a tree, and have a son. And the frequent repetition of this statement subconsciously imposes an image and goal of my life. I have built very many houses and planted very many trees, and although I have one adult child, I still did not understand what such a phrase was said for. But, having decided to figure it out, I learned that something similar was written a very long time ago, but with a different meaning: "A man must first build a house and plant a vineyard, and then marry." Someone among the wise men understood that hasty marriages would not lead to anything good.

In our world there are very many all kinds of sciences and disciplines that provide education and necessary knowledge.

We study all this from school desks, and it often happens that much of it is simply not needed throughout our entire life.

But all of us, men and women, are created by God for each other, so that, having once met and getting to know each other better, we could create marital unions and in them continue to know our companion, discovering the infinite potential of our hidden abilities and possibilities.

But for some reason no one teaches us this, it is rarely taught anywhere, and, as a rule, no one is interested in this when creating a family and even more so when it already exists. Feelings and desires have become faithful teachers of our era, who very quickly convince people in love that all that is lacking for their complete happiness is only a lavish wedding.

Communicating with many girls who have at least once been to someone's wedding celebration, I noticed one common picture. They all dreamed of someday having their own white dress, to come out in it to their friends and appear before them in all their beauty. In my life I have not seen more beautiful women than a bride adorned for the groom. It happens that you don't even recognize a familiar person under all kinds of decorations. And in all photographs you try to make out what the newlyweds look like. And, as a rule, in all comments you hear the same thing: "Beautiful!" Is it really worth creating a family for the sake of this exclamation?

Of course, not everything is so bad, and I know many happy families, but let's look at your hands. Raise them with fingers up and imagine the absence of every second finger. Will it be pleasant for you if you have five healthy fingers left on two hands? Will you be filled with joy that the surviving fingers faithfully serve you further, although there is a threat of losing them too?

Destroyed marriages are the pain of our time. Homeless and unwanted children will not make our world happier. The pain of breaking relationships does not add happiness and meaning of life to my heart. And, having such baggage, for some reason we do not try to fix this in the next generation by teaching children

from our mistakes, but we raise scientists and professors who remain absolute ignoramuses in understanding the science of family happiness.

When you see your son in an embrace with a new girlfriend and try to tell him about the secrets and meaning of a happy family, most likely he will not listen to you. He already knows himself what to do and what happiness consists of. His hormonal experiences open up wonderful prospects for future bliss, into which he confidently walks with his unfamiliar life companion.

If I begin to erect the walls of my future house directly on sand, without laying a solid foundation, then what will I build? A house on sand. And it will be a cheap but beautiful structure. All that remains is to fill it with comfort and cheerful children. One should not think about unforeseen storms and spoil one's life with unnecessary worries. My neighbor has the same kind of house, and he looks quite happy.

Although I know how to build sturdy houses that will withstand all the attacks of bad weather, I was an absolute ignoramus in building my family happiness. I did not know God, did not see the goal, and did not understand the meaning. The only thing that saved my marriage from destruction was the understanding that this is a union for life and that God hates divorce. But such notions do not make family everyday life happy. This is not enough. And if there is no happiness, then the family becomes an anvil where constant fiery tests of strength take place, which teach much but do not make these relationships better.

But I found Jesus, the Source of all happiness, and invited God into my life. I did not want to put up with pitiful existence in my problems, and I cried out to Heaven, wanting to delve into the mysteries of eternal happiness. And the Lord began to open the veil before His laws, which are quite simple to understand and assimilate.

Living by the laws of happiness, a person becomes the happiest in the world, even if the conditions of surrounding life do not suit this.

The science of family happiness requires much time, which is worth spending on learning it, even if you are not planning to create your own family. This will come by itself when the time comes. But whether I will be ready or not, I decide myself. In any case, even if I have met a real candidate for creating a family, one should not speed up this process. The time spent in knowing each other and God's will for this union lays a solid foundation for future happiness. And it will inevitably be with those who study it and practice it in their relationships.

It will be wise to study for many years to be a doctor before a hopelessly ill person comes to you, believing that you know how to help him.

Feelings and desires adorn any marriage if they are built on a solid foundation and are under the control of reason and will, and not vice versa. The more you consult about building your house and apply this in life, the more solid this building will be.

Once the Syrian military commander Naaman decided to receive quick healing from leprosy according to his expectations and feelings. But he was advised to dip seven times in the Jordan, which drove him into a rage. However, wise servants convinced the commander to follow the prophet's instructions, and the disease went away. Not everything that I consider happiness brings happiness. This science needs to be studied diligently and for a long time.

Questions for Reflection on This Chapter

1. Please read Ps. 89:10; Eccl. 5:1; 8:10; Prov. 14:8; 19:2,14; 20:25; 21:5; 28:22; 31:10-12,30; 2 Kings 5:1-4; Is. 52:11-12; 1 Tim. 4:16; 1 Cor. 3:19-20; James 3:13; Eph. 4:1-4; Col. 2:2-3; Matt. 7:24-27 in light of this topic.
2. What did you understand from this topic?
3. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
4. Did you read those verses that were presented for reflection in the first point of this assignment? If not, where are you hurrying to?

5. Is it worth making hasty decisions in creating a family union? What if your chosen one changes his/her mind while you are observing him/her? And what then?
6. Is family something important? Is it worth approaching its creation and building very wisely?
7. Is it worth taking as an example the quick weddings of some biblical heroes? 1 Sam. 25:40-42.
8. Why can haste in creating a family be a bad foundation for building family happiness?
9. How not to hurry if the years are pressing, and there are not so many candidates for marital union? And here they offered hand and heart.
10. Everything is clear with haste, but is it necessary to delay creating a family if you have comprehensively studied a person and understood that he/she is to your heart?
11. What sad consequences can a quick decision in creating a family bring?
12. How much time does a person need to understand how suitable for him/her is the one with whom he/she plans to live his/her whole life?
13. Is God interested in my family happiness?
14. How can I understand God's will regarding my decision to create a family?
15. Is it worth studying the science of a happy family if I am not going to create one?

Normal Conditions of Friendship

Once I rented a plot of land not far from our house and began to create my garden on it. I did not know how and what grows, and intuitively prepared the soil, sifting it from stones and adding compost and manure to the obtained earth. As a result, everything I planted grew. I decided not to add chemical fertilizers to the soil and not to spray my plants with anything.

Over the years I understood that garden plants have their own laws of planting, growth, and development. What suits one is not always acceptable for another. Something needs frequent watering, and something should not be watered so often.

Having once bought several blueberry bushes, I stuck them in ordinary soil and waited for a rich harvest. In the first year it brought some fruit from its reserve, and in the second year it began to wither and die, but with all its twigs it still clung to life. I understood that I was doing something wrong and decided to find out from specialists how to proceed. It turned out that this crop needs acidic soil, which should not come into contact with normal ground. I dug a deep pit, lined it with film, and poured into it what the professionals recommended, mixing everything thoroughly. As a result, the blueberry came to life and began to delight me with an annual abundant bearing of fruit.

My fruit trees also need care, pruning, and protection from ants. When I do everything necessary, I rejoice in the rich abundance of berries and fruits. And those trees that do not bear fruit, I cut down and plant others in their place.

Due to the abundant harvest in my plantings, I became famous among my neighbors as an experienced gardener who grows everything most delicious and in large quantities. And I do not consider myself such, because I do almost nothing, but only create favorable conditions for the life of plants, and they then take care of themselves.

But I noticed that various pests also like my harvest. And since I do not spray anything with anything, the "eaters" of fruits

appreciated this and took note of it. God's flock must also feed on something.

And I also noticed that weeds grow everywhere and by themselves, not needing any care or concern. And the longer you don't notice them, the bigger they become. And if at the beginning of growth they could be easily pulled out and thrown away, then later they need to be dug out and much time and effort must be applied to their removal.

And I also have a greenhouse in which delicate tomatoes grow that need special care and tending. Growing them takes most of my time. But then at the appointed time the tomatoes bring so much fruit that I manage to share all this with many of my neighbors.

Relationships between people somewhat remind me of the laws of plant life. There are good people who, having fallen into an unfavorable habitat, begin to wither and spiritually die. And there are those who, like a pest, having gotten into good company, begin to destroy everything good and cultured around them. And there is not even any talk of any good fruit; one would preserve what is still alive. But since the pest is a person, he must also be cared for and given due attention. As a result, we see what we have and are surprised where the fruits are.

In love for one another there are certain laws that remain constant and firm, regardless of whether I know them or not. Where two people decide to love each other, it is necessary that these two mutually ensure that their love is love, and not a vacuum cleaner that sucks everything into itself and gives nothing back. Love for one another develops only when both friends create normal conditions for their relationship, invest their hearts in them, and ensure that no alien spirit penetrates their union. When all these conditions are mutually observed, then the fruit does not make itself wait long and begins to develop rapidly and nourish people who love each other. Also, other people manage to taste something from this friendship, and the influence of loving people spreads very far, and the

fruit of their love becomes very tasty, saturating all their environment.

Knowing the taste, strength, and influence of love, Jesus commanded us to have it in our relationships, and at the end of time He wants us to sell all this in symbols of Heavenly treasures, teaching us to live in what is acquired.

Nowhere does fruit grow so beautifully as in our love for one another. We create ideal greenhouse conditions for it, where with the kindness of our hearts, mutual faith in God, unity of thoughts and spirit, we warm the tender plant of our love and protect it from destructive attacks. People from outside do not have access to the greenhouse of our love for one another, and therefore it is under the special protection of our choice to love and be tender, principled, and faithful in this love.

The enemy of the soul hates such unions and sends his pests so that through gossip, tale-bearing, ridicule, envy, and other sins they introduce distrust and suspicion into our relationships. Here one must be on guard, identifying alien fire that does not warm but burns and destroys everything good from within.

Caring for plants, I show special wisdom. I monitor the correct observance of all laws, otherwise I will not have a harvest, and everything will perish. But in love for one another, for some reason I decide that care is not needed, and the plant will somehow grow strong by itself, and then I sit on the ruins of friendship and am surprised why my friend deflated so quickly when I periodically bit him, testing his love for strength. Although he says he loves me, he no longer draws close to me, wanting to be healthy, which naturally causes my nagging and mockery of such love.

Such a spirit destroys from within the closest attachment. And one should not blame one's loving friend for this break, who with faith in you decided to build friendship, accepting everything except your open hostility to him.

Love for one another is a very delicate plant that needs an atmosphere of love from both sides. It is very sensitive to everything that can kill it, and therefore it is worth leaving all

one's external experiences and falls outside the boundaries of friendly relations and not manifesting an alien spirit, wanting to test the friend's strength with it. The friend will endure, but the plant risks perishing.

Sometimes a friend may be depressed because he was crushed or he fell. This information, although sad, says that somewhere in the friend's life there are not quite good conditions for his normal life, and he does not know how to behave in such a situation. Then your fresh and optimistic view from the side will help turn all these problems of the friend for good, find a way out in choosing happiness, and continue to go together on this path, finding the road to victory.

If my friend and I do not fight for the purity and warmth of our relationship and do not cherish it, then it will soon end, and we will be surprised that suddenly the friend turned out to be not real.

The fruit of the Spirit does not grow like a weed, anywhere. It grows and bears fruit only under certain conditions that I create for it, or my friend and I create.

To love an enemy and abundantly distribute holiness and pearls to those who do not value it can be done unilaterally, but in relationships with a friend everything must be with love and special tenderness.

Questions for Reflection on This Chapter

1. Please read Gal. 6:7; 1 Pet. 1:22; Rom. 8:14; 12:9-10,16; Prov. 14:1; 17:9,17; 18:24; 22:11; Song 7:11; Matt. 7:6,16; 13:18-23; Is. 5:21; Rev. 3:18; John 13:34-35; Gal. 5:15,22-23 in light of this topic.
2. What did you understand from this topic?
3. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
4. If you have a friend with whom you love each other, did you pay attention to what kind of fruit of the Spirit you have in your relationship?
5. Does love for a friend deprive me of choice in how to build relationships?
6. Is it worth loving a friend at all times?

7. What can be the difference between a mistake, foolishness, intent, and vice in a friend's behavior? Should one react to them in the same way?
8. What to do if a spirit of faultfinding and discontent has penetrated our relationship with a friend?
9. Can I with my behavior tempt a friend to a bad attitude toward me?
10. Is it worth loving one who loves you from a pure heart?
11. Can it be said that our love for one another is the beginning of what will continue for all Eternity?
12. Is love for one another work or an unbearable burden? Or what is it?
13. If I still have no friends whom I should love, should I look for them, and where to look?
14. Is the fruit of the Spirit in relationships something important, or does it not matter what grows between us?
15. Should a greenhouse plant be put outside so that it grows strong from various weather events?

The Mystery of Family and Friendship

If you ask your acquaintances why families are created and what a family is, you will most likely hear answers: So as not to be alone or not to die of boredom; To give birth to and raise children; To perform joint ministry; So that the human race does not end; To have legal right and access to the body of the marriage partner; To enter into the inheritance and wealth of the spouse; So that someone takes care of you and feeds you; So that, so that, so that...

Family is the most amazing and diverse cell of any society. Through the family comes the flourishing of any state. Family is that place in which the human soul finds peace and comfort, to rest and gain strength for a new working day.

If you ask more informed specialists about the purpose of creating a family, they will answer that the most important thing in relationships is knowing each other and constantly discovering new features of your partner. And the foundation of these relationships should be the Lord and His Word. And, understanding the goal and having a firm foundation, one can build and plan anything.

Family is what was established and given to humanity by God at creation. By acquiring a family, a person receives something important that is part of his nature. And ideally all people should live in families or have their own good families for good relationships. But what do we see? The enemy of the soul destroys everything conceived by God and presents to the world a mirage that is difficult to catch up with.

But God's plan for the family remains in force, and it must be studied, put into practice, and presented to the world as an unshakable monument to the love and wisdom of the Lord, embodied in people.

Friendship is what, according to God's design, should be present in all relationships between people and constantly delight our hearts with an abundance of warmth and light in such heartfelt interaction.

Love is what binds the souls of people and friends into something beautiful and makes our relationships very tasty and valuable, real and interesting.

Eternity, which we all await, will have in it all these factors of God's scenario, and it is by these laws that we will grow and develop through the unceasing years of eternity. We do not know what families will be like there, how the life of the saved will be arranged, what heavenly holidays will look like, but it can be said that everyone will be merry and very well.

However, God's plan for the last time consists in restoring the ruins of human relationships and showing to all the visible and invisible world God's glory written in the hearts of Christ's followers.

Love for one another, which Jesus commanded us to have before His death, is God's main strategic plan for the last days. Although love has always been relevant and in demand, but because of the multiplication of lawlessness it has grown cold in many and has turned in people's thoughts into ruins of the Middle Ages, which many do not want to approach. But the Lord wants to establish His banner in this area and in this way overcome all sin.

Friendship gives me a person as a person with whom I can have friendly relations and close ties, perform joint ministry and many good deeds for each other and for others. And love for one another makes these relationships special, sincere, unanimous.

Faith in God and unity of opinion create favorable soil for relationships in friendship and love. Having embarked on this path through accepting a mutual decision to be friends and love one another, we invite the Deity into our lives, and the seed of love sown in our hearts begins to sprout and bear abundant fruit and much fruit.

Love for one another opens to loving people the veil of the relationships of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit within Themselves. Loving a friend, I acquire Eternity for myself in these relationships, understanding that I have approached an

infinitely beautiful object for deep knowledge that will never end but will constantly delight me with its discoveries and blessings that are contained in the deep bowels of the friend's heart. And in all this knowledge there will be God's seal of infinite wisdom and creative power of our dear Creator.

Nowhere does God reveal Himself so deeply and accessibly as in our love for one another. The Bible acquaints us with the truth about God, nature reveals to us the beauty and majesty of the Creator, Jesus shows us the magnificence of God's character, and love for one another embodies all this knowledge and knowledge of God in the practice and reality of our life, not excluding God from our relationships but revealing Him even more deeply in this mutual love. And as a consequence of such relationships, constant praise and gratitude sounds from our lips to the One who so wonderfully arranged everything.

One who is not born again will not be able to love, for he has no access to this Source of life. But in personal knowledge of Jesus as one's Savior, these sources open for the thirsty soul, and the soul, being satisfied, seeks ways to glorify God.

And the Father is glorified when we, having a connection with Jesus, begin to love one another and in this love bear much fruit of the Holy Spirit.

To create a happy family is a good plan, and true happiness has its laws that are worth knowing and observing. It would be ideal if people believing in God, having unity of faith, would first become friends and in this friendship make a decision to love each other always, and then, rejoicing in this love, determine for themselves a life companion with whom they would decide to create a happy family union. Then there would be no family conflicts, divorces, and children orphaned with living parents.

Love for one another is a great mystery of God's presence in the relationship of two people. And when these loving friends decide to create a marital union, then this spiritual mystery becomes even more incomprehensible from the outside but

opens its doors to deep knowledge of each other and God in these relationships. And this mystery is very great.

When I am just embarking on the path of love for one another, I already understand that I am plunging into something great and inaccessible that I did not know before. And the creation of a family in such a union of two friends is an incomprehensible cosmos with all its amazing mysteries and discoveries that you learn from within.

To understand how incomprehensible everything I describe is, try to explain why Christ needs a bride with whom He plans marriage, as the Bible says. This is an incomprehensible mystery that will soon become reality and will reveal to the bride the beauty of relationships from within, and will give the entire Universe food for thought and solving this great riddle.

That is why the enemy of the soul now so fiercely attacks the institution of the family, wanting to make it a curse and an unbearable burden for humanity.

But God's plans are carried out no matter what. Love paves the way. Those people who want to embark on the path of love will know from their own experience the advantage of such a life and will never choose anything else.

For a very long time the enemy imposed his abominations on the world. Now the time has come to love, the time has come for God to act, for His law has been broken.

Where will I be in this confrontation? Only I decide. Where will you be, friend? It is for you to decide. And let us unite in love for one another and see how good the Lord is?

Questions for Reflection on This Chapter

1. Please read 1 Pet. 1:22; 1 Cor. 1:4-10; 3:10-17; 4:1-2; 13:12-13; Eccl. 3:1,8; Ps. 119:126; Col. 3:18-19; Eph. 5:25,31-33; Rev. 19:7-9; 21:2; John 13:34-35 in light of this topic.
2. What did you understand from this topic?
3. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
4. Why are families created?
5. Do you know God's ultimate plan for the family?

6. Is it clear to you why Jesus decided to create a family with His bride?
7. Is it worth despairing if you already have a family that differs from the ideal and burdens you?
8. Does love and friendship have any relation to family?
9. Will the decision of two friends who love each other to create a joint family be some terrible mistake?
10. How do you understand, in light of the lessons covered, the purpose of creating a family?
11. Is it worth creating a family to avoid fornication? 1 Cor. 7:2
12. Do you think the Lord will reveal the mystery and meaning of a happy family to those who will build it and ask Him about it?
13. Is it worth creating families at all in the last time?
14. Is the thought clear to you that your life companion in Jesus is an eternal person given to you for eternal discoveries?
15. Will it be interesting for you to eternally study your friend, discovering new features of his soul?

Love for One Another Is...

Jesus gave us a new commandment "that you love one another." He expects that we will fulfill it. To many of us it will seem new, and for some very new. What this means can be understood only by experience, living in obedience to this word and seeing its power in one's life.

Love for one another is that stage of faith at which I become a witness not only to how much my love for my neighbor affects him, but I myself turn into an object of my friend's love and with my heart feel the touch of Heavenly Agape to the strings of my soul.

Love for one another is a mutual exchange of the best possible relationship that can be imagined, and which is formed in the depths of God's heart to then become human property.

Love for one another is an invitation of God into our fellowship and allowing our will to become a conductor of God's grace in relation to us.

Love for one another is the most beautiful feeling and the most amazing relationship of two people who can share with each other the most valuable treasures of their souls, not fearing to be ridiculed or misunderstood.

Love for one another is childlike trust and absolute sincerity in relationships, where I am not ashamed to be myself and can freely share with a friend what overflows me, seeing exactly the same behavior from his side.

Love for one another is a tender mutual touch to the most distant corners of our hearts and a deep immersion into the friend's soul, in order to discover at the achieved depth new mysteries of his soul that you did not even have an idea about.

Love for one another is comprehension of the great and inaccessible, the existence of which you did not know, but now have in your life and cannot believe that you have become the possessor of such a wonderful discovery, which is now your eternal property.

Love for one another is the highest quality life that can be imagined and which is so beautiful that it is difficult to believe in the possibility of its existence. However, it exists and exists in your life.

Love for one another is constant mutual discoveries of new features and joyful exchange of them. They do not cease to amaze us, showing how interesting we are.

Love for one another is visible fruit of the Holy Spirit that can be tasted at any time, enjoying the aroma of Eternal life and being filled with power from above for new love.

Love for one another is the fullest manifestation of all the beauty of Eternal life that we have by faith in Jesus, and which becomes in us a living source quenching our thirst.

Love for one another is something that is impossible to be satiated with, but which can be tasted in any quantity and at any time, without risking experiencing disgust from the abundance of positive emotions.

Love for one another is the natural state of the soul of a person who has finally returned to the Creator's original design, violated in Eden, but being restored in our life and returning us to harmony with God.

Love for one another is constant natural reflections on the happiness of a friend who is constantly busy thinking about your happiness and doing everything so that only you feel good with him.

Love for one another is pure thoughts, pure relationships, pure and correct motives, pure and holy behavior, pure communication on pure topics.

Love for one another is absolute acceptance of another person into one's life and deep mutual knowledge in order to constantly rejoice in new discoveries of our research and enrich each other with them.

Love for one another is God's blessing that with unchanging constancy enriches each of us and the Lord Himself and brings no sorrow with it.

Love for one another is true love for one's neighbor, which naturally manifests itself and does not try to play some role.

Love for one another is you and I, united by God, so that in this union of love we will never part, but develop our relationship throughout earthly life and take them with us into Eternity, so that through infinitely long years we understand the simple truth that love does not pass away.

Love for one another is something that many do not have in their lives but think that they live in it, not even trying to understand what it is and whether they possess it.

Love for one another is the best heavenly relationships given to people for a deeper knowledge of God from within themselves, and a unique opportunity to give Heaven knowledge of us in the beauty of new discoveries of our character and unique features of our souls, into which angels desire to look.

Love for one another is Heavenly harmony in relationships that shows us the beauty of Heavenly life already now.

Love for one another is deep reverence, respect, and sensitivity to each other's life, it is joy and mutual acceptance.

Love for one another is God's presence in every action, thought, and feeling, leading to almighty creative power that changes and transforms everything and everyone around with great speed and might.

Love for one another is abundance of the fruit of the Holy Spirit, through which the Father is glorified in our relationships.

Love for one another is healing of the soul and restoration in us of God's image in the likeness of His beloved Son.

Love for one another is absolute freedom in choosing how to build relationships, when and how often to have them, what to do, how long to communicate, and what to talk about.

Love for one another is building the strongest relationships on the most solid foundation, which is Jesus.

Love for one another is a wonderful foundation for creating a family if the status of both friends allows it, and their interest in each other opens their hearts to closer prospects within the framework of God's law.

Love for one another is love and friendship even within the framework of family relationships, which glues spouses into one whole and complete person.

Love for one another is God's plan for the last days, which is revealed to those who have embarked on this path.

Love for one another is something very new, tasty, unusual, interesting, entertaining, fascinating, right, and blessed from above.

Love for one another is the natural way of thinking of a righteous person who, looking at God's glory, is transformed into the same image from glory to glory.

Love for one another is a successful funeral of the old man and victory over my selfishness.

Love for one another is not only you, and I, and you and I together, but also new friends for new relationships and new discoveries.

Love for one another is natural happiness of heavenly origin that accompanies us in all our everyday affairs.

Love for one another is new plans for the friend's happiness every day and their successful embodiment in our relationships.

Love for one another is a ray of light in the kingdom of darkness, living water in an ocean of garbage, the meaning of life in earthly vanity, and much of what the world cannot give.

Love for one another is what shows the world whose disciples we are and attracts new hearts to Jesus.

Love for one another is...

Questions for Reflection on This Chapter

1. Please read John 13:34-35; 1 Pet. 1:22; Prov. 17:17; 18:24; 1 Cor. 13:4-8; 1 John 3:11,23-24; 4:7-11 in light of this topic.

2. What did you understand from this topic?
3. Do you have any other verses from the Bible that came to your mind?
4. What is love for one another?
5. Do you experience in your life the experience of love for one another? If yes, how do you determine that this is that very right love?
6. Do you believe that the Lord is present in mutual love for one another?
7. How does one-sided love for a friend differ from love for one another?
8. What will happen if I want to love someone like this, but no one responds?
9. Are there many people in your church with whom you would dare to have love for one another?
10. What to do if I understand that I do not have such love? Do I need to do something?
11. Is love for one another a conditional relationship? Or does the Lord expect something more solid from us?
12. Can our feelings become a barometer of our love for one another?
13. What to do if I understood that my love for a friend is conditional, and I love him only on condition that he behaves worthily?
14. Can Jesus teach me what I myself will never learn?
15. Is there freedom and deep respect for the friend's choice present in your love with a friend?

Jesus in Love for One Another

Love for one another is the most beautiful thing that can be wished for a person.

It is worth noting that we are not given detailed instructions for such relationships. But we can quite count on the personal presence of Christ in this mutual decision. It is He who through the Holy Spirit begins to teach us this Heavenly science, taking into account our mentality, education, need, and thirst.

When I enter the world of my friend and open my heart to him, we begin to know each other from within and discover for ourselves a completely different world and different relationships. We were created by God for love, and when we return to God's original plan and know from personal experience the inner content of our friend's soul, we experience something special, something that the world cannot give or show. And our mutual love binds us with the strongest bonds of agape and friendship, which cannot be simply and painlessly broken.

The more I allow a friend to love me and give him the same, the stronger our love and friendship become. Love for one another is not a superficial party for a couple of days, but a conscious complete immersion in the world of one's neighbor and an emotional attachment to his heart.

And at this level of relationships, a sense of danger arises and the thought: do I not love my friend more than Jesus? Has this person dear to my heart not become closer to me than my dear Savior? Or perhaps I have taken Christ's place in my friend's heart? These are very serious questions that are worth paying attention to.

A dilemma arises. We begin to fulfill Christ's commandment about love for one another because we love Jesus and want to be obedient to Him in everything. But in knowledge and love for one another we become so close and dear and open up so deeply that it becomes scary whether God will punish us out of

jealousy, because in our friendship and mutual love we no longer give the Lord as much time and attention as before.

And if my friend and I decide not to draw as close as the heart thirsts for, but to maintain distance in relationships in order to give God due time and place, will our love for one another not turn into a strange theater? It is difficult to give a direct answer to all these questions, since there are no clear instructions on this matter.

I would like to share one example from life that may somehow shed light on what is happening. When my children live in my house, who have reached their adulthood and can already choose their own path, I continue to care for them, feed them, be interested in their personal life, and ensure that they keep me informed of their plans, movements, and acquaintances. I have the right to demand that they come home at a certain time and go to bed. They can always turn to me, and I can enter their personal space without special invitation.

But something happens that I immediately notice. My daughter introduces me to her new friend and after some time asks for my blessing to create their family. What should I do? I understand that now she will never spend cozy evenings with me by the fireplace. Never again will I be able to just enter her room like this to chat about life. Moreover, she has no time at all to devote to me. But as a wise father I understand that I prepared her for this moment, and now I release her into independent sailing on the ship of her life friend. Although I do not cease to remain dad, our relationship is no longer the same.

I think that in our spiritual growth there are certain stages and transitions that God knows perfectly well, and to which He leads us as we grow.

Eternity will be filled with all kinds of living beings who will claim my time, heart, and reciprocity, giving themselves completely in return. And what is God to do with such children who will think from morning to evening about each other's happiness and devote all their eternal time to this?

And if another friend appears in my life with whom we decide to love each other? And if these friends become more and more, and we really love each other, and we have such close relationships that everyone recognizes us as Christ's disciples, then what should we do with this?

I cannot say that in our love for one another there is no God. He is there, but our relationship with Him has passed into our relationship with a friend. Although I do not cease to set aside time for personal prayers and reading spiritual things, I notice that more and more time is spent on friends, and their time is increasingly invested in me. And how else? After all, we love each other, and this love draws us to those we love and who reciprocate.

It would be foolish to spend one's whole life asking God for a loving friend, dreaming of such a relationship, studying this science, and then, having received an answer to these expectations and prayers, hide from friends because they have become very close and dear to me, and I became scared of such happiness. What if this is some kind of trap?

The Lord knows our dilemma and wants to comfort us in this matter. If I honestly share my experiences with Him and ask Him to destroy everything that emotionally binds me to a friend if it is very dangerous for me, and it does not disappear but becomes stronger and more joyful, then should I myself break this connection?

What should I say to my daughter if, after several months of living with her husband, she comes to me with repentance that she gives all her best time to her life friend and loves him so strongly that in this love she cannot spend much time with me as before? Should I really advise her to break off the relationship? Or will I tell her that she was raised for this time all her life?

The Lord knows perfectly well what I will encounter in my love and friendship with my friend. But He also commands me to love him. And this means that in such a relationship I can count on His special presence, which I have not experienced before.

And when I see what an abundance of fruit the Holy Spirit brings in our friendship, I feel, I do not understand everything, but I calm down and go further. Love for one another is a great mystery about the last time that the Lord wants to reveal to those who embark on this path and will act according to His plan, but He was waiting for the participation of my friend and me.

Is it possible to make one's friend an idol and put him in Christ's place in our love for one another? My carnal heart wants only this, and the enemy of the soul will necessarily incline me or my friend to such a turn of events. But God's Spirit will immediately react to such a situation and will disturb the heart of the one they are trying to seat on God's throne. Perhaps there will be a crisis in the relationship, but it will not be destroyed, and the loving friend will gently make it clear that he is not Jesus to be loaded with everything and expect something special from him. He is a simple person and an ordinary friend who can love at all times and delve into the essence of things, but not perform miracles and change destinies.

The Lord protects from evil the hearts of those who decided to love one another and ask for His blessing on this.

Questions for Reflection on This Chapter

1. Please read 1 Thess. 5:21; 1 Cor. 4:5; 2 Cor. 1:12; 1 Sam. 20:41-42; 2 Sam. 1:26; 1 Pet. 1:22; Phil. 4:6-9; John 13:34-35; 1 John 3:11,23-24; 4:7-8,12,21; Acts 10:25-26; 14:9-18; Rev. 19:10; Song 7:10-11 in light of this topic.
2. What did you understand from this topic?
3. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
4. Are we given somewhere a step-by-step instruction on how we should love one another?
5. When Jesus gave the commandment about love for one another, did He call us to violate the moral law? Is it worth calling sin what the Bible does not call sin?
6. If it is not customary to love one another in my church, should I introduce something new into it?

7. Do you think that in love for one another your hearts will become attached to each other? Or will your feelings be in complete isolation?
8. Does love for one another imply a special relationship with a friend in which we become especially happy?
9. What do you think, how does Jesus feel about us beginning to love one another with all our heart, and all our thoughts revolve around this event?
10. Can love for one another be confused with being in love? What is the difference between one and the other?
11. Is God present in our love for one another?
12. How can other people know that we are Christ's disciples from our love for one another?
13. Do you think that love for one another requires additional time and moreover the best time?
14. Is love for one another something new for you? Is it worth studying this science and immersing yourself headlong into practice?
15. What to do if I want to love a friend, learned all the theory about this love, made an announcement about it in church and through all my channels, but have not found a loving friend?

Dangerous "Well-Wishers"

When acquiring friends, I try to be sincere and genuine. Not everyone understands and perceives me the same way, not every friend of mine is in a hurry to open up and draw close to me. I respect the freedom of choice of my friends and do not impose myself on anyone, but at the same time I periodically remind them of myself and participate in the needs of others if I see that I can help.

Someone gets to know me better, and someone keeps me at a distance. But whoever my friend may be, in my heart I choose love and friendship toward him and adhere to this.

Any interaction I have with a friend brings trials into our communication. I do not know what surprises the enemy of the soul is preparing for us, but I know for certain that he will definitely try to destroy what the Lord is building. And God allows the testing of our love and invites us to enter this fire.

Knowing that in our friendship any misunderstanding may occur for which we are not prepared, I propose to my friend to be honest and sincere in everything and immediately share everything that may enter our relationship and damage it. These may be very good experiences or bitter disappointments.

I know the story of one friendship that was tested by fire. Adam and his wife had friendly fellowship with their Creator, who personally came to them in the cool of the day and had a wonderful relationship with them. With each day they knew each other better and better and remained in constant joy from such fellowship. God could be asked any question and immediately receive the wisest and most correct answer. The Creator strove to give His children everything they needed and explain to them everything that interested them. Their friendship grew and strengthened with each day. And every new day brought discoveries and blessings that greatly delighted the heart. Everything around was made with love and for love. The first people lived in the atmosphere of Heaven, and nothing overshadowed their happiness. They knew God

personally, face to face, knew His voice and discovered for themselves the beauty of His character from personal fellowship.

But someone came who decided to share his opinion about God. The unfamiliar "well-wisher" looked very attractive, and his speeches were quite convincing. At first he began to speak through an animal called a "serpent," which attracted the attention of Adam's wife. A talking serpent was something unusual even for those who were accustomed to seeing miracles. And the words he began to share made her think. Before the wife was someone who knew the Creator very well and decided to initiate the curious woman into the mysteries of God's soul, which she had not even suspected. What the serpent said was something new and attractive. Adam's wife learned from her new interlocutor that their Heavenly Friend was hiding very important things and did not want to initiate people into the mysteries of good and evil, forbidding them to do what opens the eyes and gives knowledge.

Eve could have gone and consulted with her husband, and then asked the Lord Himself about what she learned, and heard from the first lips an explanation for what interested her so much. But for some reason she decided to believe the serpent and tasted the forbidden fruit. The enemy of the soul gained power over the will of the sinful woman and already through her lips began to address Adam, telling about what God is really like, and how much of everything interesting He hides under the guise of prohibitions. Adam could have called upon God's Name and consulted with his Heavenly Father and heard God's opinion on the questions that arose. He knew his Creator personally and had close friendly relations with Him. I think that the Lord would not have left Adam in ignorance about Himself if there had been a desire to know the truth from the Primary Source. But man preferred to trust the enemy of the soul and violated God's prohibition, tasting the fruit from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. The very name of the tree says that sin has in it something good that may look quite good and right, but the presence of evil in this good makes such fruit unfit for consumption, for it brings death.

A similar story is repeated very often in our time. If I decided to be friends with someone, wished to love and be a friend, then perhaps there will be those who want to save me and my friend from our friendship. And such "well-wishers" may be completely unfamiliar people, or they may turn out to be the closest friends.

I recall a case when I decided to become a friend to one person who interested me with his cheerfulness. I first made this decision in my heart, asked for God's blessing on it, and then declared to the unfamiliar person that I decided to become his friend, which greatly surprised him and turned his whole life upside down. Immediately I began to receive information from all sides about what this person is really like, how many problems he causes, and how dangerous he is. I became uncomfortable. But my decision to be a friend remained in force, and I wished to personally understand all this. I made a choice to love the one I chose and to have my own opinion about the one who has so many enemies. The Lord revealed much to me and showed me in these relationships, and I personally became convinced that my friend has character imperfections, but this does not interfere with our friendship. I accept him as he is, while not agreeing with what I see in a different light. And this person perfectly understands that I know everything about him, but with this knowledge I remain a friend who loves at all times. I do not share with anyone what I know about a friend, but can only discuss some details of my knowledge with Jesus. Such an attitude preserved our friendship, and I am clean before my friend in that I am not saving all his other friends and acquaintances from him.

In communicating with my friends, I agree that we will share with each other everything that may bring misunderstanding into our relationship. And together we solve many issues.

To my surprise, "well-wishers" appear who decide to save my friends from friendship with me. I do not try to learn their names because they prefer to carry out their "good deed" anonymously. But in response to such actions, I can only present myself and tell the whole truth from the first lips, and

what motives and feelings I have in this or that matter. And if my friend decides to clarify and hear from me my opinion about me, then I gladly share this. I think that only the Lord knows me better than I know myself, so I always have something to tell.

With my close friends I have more communication than with "well-wishers," but for some reason it happens that a minimum of information about me, and not always current, sounds more convincing in the ears of a friend who knows me better than everyone else.

The Bible warns us that tale-bearers and carriers of other people's secrets can become dangerous well-wishers with whom it is better not to communicate. I try to adhere to this rule, but I cannot protect my friends from such a spirit and therefore I enter this test of friendship with pain in my heart, understanding that such communication on the side can separate us forever without cause. Unfortunately, someone believes rumors, and I become not who I am, and our friendly relations cease. But fortunately, there are people who decide to hear my opinion about me too, and all doubts are dispelled. And we continue to love each other and are very happy.

Questions for Reflection on This Chapter

1. Please read Gen. 3:1-13; Amos 3:3; Eccl. 4:9-12; Lev. 19:16; Prov. 11:13; 16:28; 18:8; 20:19; 26:20-26; Ps. 15:1-3; 101:5-7; Luke 3:14; 5:29-39; Mark 2:15-28; John 21:20-22; Rev. 12:10; Rom. 1:28-32 in light of this chapter.
2. What did you understand from this topic?
3. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
4. Have you experienced separation from friends because of gossip from other people?
5. Is it worth warning friends of danger if you see that they have fellowship with dangerous people? Matt. 16:6,12.
6. What is the difference between tale-bearing and warning? 1 Cor. 15:33.
7. Have you had it happen that someone told you their "truth" about your friend, and you listened to it with pleasure?

8. Is it pleasant for you to be friends with a person who has been blackened in your eyes?
9. Is it worth expecting that my love and friendship with a friend will not be subjected to any trials?
10. What is the difference between truth and slander?
11. What to do if my friend has distanced himself from me because of slander against me?
12. For what reason did the Lord lose part of the faithful angels? Was He able to bring them back?
13. Can my confidential relationship with a friend protect us from various "well-wishers"?
14. Should my friend and I invite new friends into our friendship?
15. If I have the "gift of seeing other people's sins," should I develop it and warn my neighbors about "dangerous" friends?

A Gift in Interesting Packaging

Do you like receiving gifts? Especially if they represent value and can serve you. I recall a time when I, being a teenager, dreamed of new jeans that all my peers wore. I walked around stores and looked at different models, dreaming that someday I would become the owner of this clothing. But the price for such items was very high, and I understood that I would never buy jeans for myself.

While resting during vacation at my grandmother's in the village, I received a package from my mother. It was strange to me that mother decided to remember us in this way. In the package lay various food products and a bag with new jeans. I could not believe my eyes. As if spellbound, I opened the bag and tried on its contents. Everything was sewn to my size. I temporarily lost the gift of speech from joy, and then my cousin and I began jumping around the house and shouting: "Delicious package! Wonderful package!" And grandmother sat quietly nearby and rejoiced at our merriment.

I put on the new pants and did not want to take them off. When I went out of the house in this attire, it seemed to me that the whole world was looking at my new clothes, but most of all I myself rejoiced at my new acquisition.

Time passed, and I do not know where those jeans are now, and those that came later no longer delighted my heart so much.

When I receive as a gift something very valuable and needed, my heart rejoices from the awareness that now I have a thing that will delight me very much.

Jesus knows the desire of my heart and prepared for me a gift in unusual packaging. All the things we acquire bring us temporary conveniences, but they cannot satisfy the heart that thirsts for love and relationships in love and friendship.

Knowing this, Jesus gave us the most beautiful gift of Heaven in the form of a new commandment about love for one another. He pronounced this command three times and each time offered new packaging for it, making it clear that special God's

blessings are wrapped in the wrapper of trials, and whoever becomes their possessor will have the greatest God's approval.

Commanding us to love one another, Jesus anticipated the joy of our love in these relationships. By faith He was touched by that genuine joy that His disciples would have when they received each other as a gift.

I did not understand what the joy consists of in love for a friend until the Lord gave me this friend, and me to him. When I realized what this gift represents, how beautiful it is, and how it can rejoice in me and delight my heart at all times, I was in special delight. The joy from such understanding is so great and so intangible by hands that you do not know from which side and how to thank God for such a miracle. And then another friend appeared and another, and another, and all this brings incredible joy to the heart.

A friend after my heart is a gift from the Lord. It is difficult in this world to find those who suit you like this. But the School of Agape Love can raise such gifts and then delight your heart with them.

It is natural to want to tell everyone about the beauty of God's commandment, about its importance, about how wonderful it is to love a friend who loves you.

When I receive something like this from Jesus, my heart begins to delve into the essence of the gift. How tasty it is! How it is able to always delight my heart! How one wants to always thank God for such miracles!

It is incomprehensible to me why God's children seek various problems on the side, consciously avoiding accepting what lies in plain sight and brings happiness?

The message to Laodicea also contains in it the acquisition of love, and it explains to me in more detail how important it is to be the possessor of gold refined by fire. Love for one another in the last time will become one of the criteria according to which the Lord will place His seal.

God's seal is the affirmation of consciousness in truth. If there is no love for one another in this consciousness, then what should the Lord seal? My lawlessness.

The choice of a friend for relationships in love is very simple. We begin to communicate on this topic and come to mutual agreement to love one another. And then we begin to develop our relationship.

If no one taught me what love is and how it works, then perhaps I will invent various things that will open to me some facets of love. But when I am taught by God and understand how agape works, then all my relationships develop more successfully.

The unusual packaging on the gift of love is all kinds of trials that reveal to us gradually, step by step, all the beauty and power of Heavenly agape.

Embark on this path, and you will see for yourself that receiving a friend as a gift for all Eternity is truly royal generosity. Nothing and no one will delight the heart as much as a friend from the Lord.

Earthly things can very quickly turn into a pile of garbage, disappointing us with their fragility. Everything in this world is perishable. But a friend and his love will always be relevant.

But it is worth noting that only mutual love brings special joy. If my friend loves me and I do not reciprocate, then it will be difficult for us to delight each other's heart. And if I love a friend and he is indifferent, then my love will be one-sided and incomplete, although my heart will rejoice in this.

I ask you, friends, fill your pockets with God's gifts, sow love everywhere possible, taste and you will see how good the Lord is.

When I prepare as a gift for a friend something desirable and useful, I rejoice even before the moment when this gift will be presented. I can even say in advance what I will give, so that the friend rejoices. But I cannot force him to love my valuable gifts. The friend must decide this himself.

The commandment about love for one another is very important in God's eyes, and He awaits those who will observe it, to give a true evaluation.

A living friend is a source of many God's blessings. He is alive in all respects. God's plan does not include friendship with the world and love for what is in the world. But God's children have a special status and unlimited potential to delight with themselves those with whom they decided to love one another.

To love one another is an endless celebration. These are abundant and constant God's blessings for all life and for all Eternity. This is the spirit of Christ in my heart. This is constant gratitude to God for such a beautiful gift.

But it must be tasted by oneself and evaluated from within one's heart by one's own discoveries.

The packaging of blessings can hide my true motives from outsiders' eyes, but at the same time reveal the value of the friend's soul, which opens up in my research step by step and delights me at all times.

Questions for Reflection on This Chapter

1. Please read John 13:34-35; 15:12-13,17-19; Is. 53:11; Prov. 17:8,17; 1 Pet. 1:22; 1 John 4:7-13; Rom. 12:10; 1 Thess. 4:9; Jer. 29:11; 1 Cor. 13:1-3 in light of this chapter.
2. What did you understand from this topic?
3. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
4. Have you already experienced love for one another? If yes, can you share your joy?
5. Do you believe that to love one another is beautiful?
6. What does love produce in the hearts and souls of friends who love one another?
7. If you do not yet have a friend with whom you love one another, is it worth praying about this?
8. How long should the love of friends for one another last?
9. Do you believe that love for one another is a special gift from the Lord for our mutual happiness?

10. Is it worth bringing relationships of love into one's family, or should one love one another only within the framework of church brotherhood?
11. What to do if I want to love and do love friends, but they do not love me?
12. Should one respect the choice of a friend with whom we love one another and take into account his interests and other attachments?
13. What will happen to me if I live my whole life with faith in God but never learn to love?
14. Is there any connection between the commandment about love for one another and the message to Laodicea?
15. Did you notice that Jesus puts His love as an example for us? John 13:34: "... as I have loved you, so you also should love one another."

To Avoid Fornication

In his First Epistle to the Corinthians 7:2, the apostle Paul gives interesting advice: "But because of fornication, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband." Corinth at that time was a pagan city of the Roman Empire, where the attitude toward the sanctity of marriage was negligent, and many pagan rituals included various elements of sexual corruption. The consciousness of the inhabitants of this city was damaged from childhood, and they could not distinguish the holy from the carnal. And in such an environment the seed of the Gospel was sown, which under the influence of the Holy Spirit successfully sprouted and brought abundant fruit.

Paul understood the carnal attractions of human hearts, and in order to somehow protect the rapidly growing church from corruption within, he wrote a command that to avoid the sin of fornication it is better for everyone to have a lawful partner and within the framework of a marital union to be protected from universal corruption. The Lord took into account the pitiful spiritual state of the inhabitants of Corinth and showed them special grace by giving such a command. But it is worth understanding whether this advice brings true happiness to the family, and whether one should build a beautiful future on such a strange foundation.

What picture do we have today? The pagan world surrounds us from all sides. Corruption bursts into our lives in every possible way, trying from childhood to get into the mind of man and make him a slave to his own passions. Even if in some countries there is a struggle against such propaganda, cinema and the internet successfully carry out their destructive work. The spirit of fornication has struck the consciousness of most people, and the church has not escaped such influence.

Any holiday is an attractive and long-awaited event when it comes into your life occasionally. If the best celebration is made a daily event, then soon this will satiate all participants, and

they will look with disgust at the event they thirsted for when it was a rarity.

When passionate attraction with a romantic coloring becomes the basis for creating a marital union, then in the marriage itself this spirit does not go anywhere but destroys family happiness from within and ruins many unions. There are many God-fearing people who understand that their marriage is holy and should not be dissolved without good reason, but at the same time they do not know how to restore the ruins of relationships that they have in their families. And, as a rule, the closest person becomes guilty of all troubles, who turns out to be so bad and stupid that living with him becomes simply impossible.

Sin is destructive, and it manifests itself not only in the spirit of fornication but also in many of its other qualities, but ignorance of the structure of human physiology leads many families to physical exhaustion at the very early stage of their formation, and as an inevitable consequence the spiritual side suffers, happiness perishes, and apathy comes.

When a family celebration becomes a daily or frequent norm of life, it loses its meaning, taste, and significance. Sooner or later a person becomes satiated, and only chemical stimulation or novelty of relationships outside marriage can bring something new and romantic.

Unfortunately, the spirit of fornication has become the main motive for creating marital unions in our church as well. No one engages in sexual education of the younger generation, and various media successfully carry out their destructive work, raising our youth in the spirit of debauchery. When I do not know the basics of my body's physiology and this connection with my spirit, then the enemy will definitely use my ignorance for his purposes. And then to correct something will be either impossible or too late.

If you ask newlyweds about what is the main reason for their marriage, they will all confidently say that they love each other, but if you inquire how enlightened they are in the structure of a

happy family and whether they understand how hormones can control a person's will, then one can only be amazed at the scarcity or absence of knowledge in this area. Young people are confident that their intuition will definitely suggest the best path to them, and their feelings and hormonal experiences will become a reliable ally in building family happiness. And the basis of this confidence will be stories from those films or books that have already managed to get into their minds.

The spirit of fornication does not disappear anywhere when a person enters marriage but takes on lawful status. Young people no longer allow anyone to interfere in their family life, making it clear that they will somehow sort things out between themselves. And the secrets of family life, especially its intimate side, are not customary to discuss with third parties.

Not in all families does something like this happen; someone, in fact, intuitively listens to the voice of the Holy Spirit and comes to the conclusion that holidays of family life should be, but the rarer, the more desirable and interesting they will be.

Such a topic and side of family life is quite delicate, and many consciously avoid education in this area. However, the intimate life of the family is God's plan for human happiness, which must be carefully researched to understand what brings blessing and what represents danger. If I am ignorant in this matter, then God will definitely be dishonored, and what He conceived as beautiful will become a curse for me and my marriage. And I will look like an intelligent person who is disgusted to delve into such topics.

Sexual attraction is embedded in the physiology of every normal person. And this is a raging fire that is very destructive when it gets out of control of reason and will and begins to control them. But a dependent person tends to mask his true feelings and motives, and he can very skillfully give an innocent appearance to his behavior. And the one who can no longer restrain his passions and does not know what to do with this is called a pervert and people try to avoid him.

The Lord wants us to understand what weak people are dealing with and what forces they are fighting. The Lord has enough power and might for victory over any other spirit. But it is always easier to direct the growth of a young plant in the right direction than to try to give the right shape to a perennial tree. What we do not do for our youth, Satan will do. And then to correct something will be much more difficult, and sometimes impossible.

Love gives wisdom in the approach to creating a family, and even if people do not know their physiological laws, then the Lord can through the Holy Spirit guide loving people to conscious abstinence in many spheres of their life. And intimate life is no exception. Complete abstinence from what is harmful and moderate use of what is beneficial is one of the basic laws of health, and common sense under the influence from above teaches these basics of happiness.

The world convinces that a lot of sex is good. And common sense and laws of health teach that the more pleasures, the less of them. Satiety and idleness have never made anyone happy.

Many people have strong will, and they can control their passions and keep the spirit of fornication in check for personal benefit. But love can destroy this evil spirit and offer something better and pure.

Questions for Reflection on This Chapter

1. Please read Eph. 5:3; 1 Cor. 6:12-20; 7:1-6; Gen. 6:2,5; 34:1-4; Lev. 19:29; Hos. 4:11; Rom. 8:4-14; Acts 15:19-20; Ezek. 16:49; Phil. 4:7-8; 1 Thess. 4:3-5; Heb. 13:4; Rev. 14:8; Prov. 23:7 in light of this topic.
2. What did you understand from this topic?
3. What other Biblical verses came to your mind?
4. Is the expression "spirit of fornication" clear to you? What is it?
5. Can family happiness be built on carnal pleasures?
6. Does human nature change after entering into a marital union?

7. Is it important to understand when creating a family what true motive drives you and your life companion?
8. It is better to create a family than to sin. Is this really better?
9. Can a person by his own strength free himself from the spirit of fornication?
10. Do you think that lessons about a happy family are needed only for those who wish to enter marriage, or do they reveal more important questions?
11. Is family lawful access to the partner's body, or does it have another purpose?
12. What marriage, in your opinion, is considered ideal and correct?
13. Why is it important to keep one's passions under control even during marriage?
14. Do you know from history the fact that all great civilizations fell because of sexual corruption?
15. Are there examples in the Bible of how the Lord punishes someone for the spirit of fornication?

The Sin of Cohabitation

Cohabitation is an extramarital union of two people who agreed to live together, keep one household, have all the advantages of family relationships, but do not wish to officially register their relationship. Also considered cohabitation are extramarital intimate short-term relationships.

The church condemns cohabitation as sin based on the seventh commandment "You shall not commit adultery" Ex. 20:14. The state does not recognize cohabitation as a family and does not give cohabitants any legal protection. Children born in such a union are called illegitimate children, and for their sake there are certain state laws establishing the rights of paternity and maternity.

Cohabitation is living together without obligations to each other, although there may be voluntary rights and duties established by the partners themselves.

Such communities can be created spontaneously, for one night or for a short period, or be more prolonged, and sometimes last a lifetime, when two people even have common children and grandchildren.

The Bible considers such relationships fornication and condemns people living in this way, calling them fornicators who have no right to Eternity.

In our time, cohabitation has become the way of thinking of a worldly person and is so firmly established in people's consciousness that it is already the norm of life in Western society. Cohabitation does not cause censure or condemnation.

There are many countries that legislatively do not infringe on the rights of cohabitants in any way and do not impose on them any administrative or criminal penalty.

In some Russian-speaking cultures there is a tendency to call such unions "civil marriage," and the cohabitant "civil husband or wife." But this is incorrect, since the church is separated

from the state, and civil marriage is called the official registration of the family union of a man and a woman.

The church in such a society cannot assign to a family an official legal status, but has the right to bless and declare its parishioners husband and wife within the framework of its denomination, endowing the newlyweds at the wedding ceremony with the spiritual status of family. This status is accepted by the entire church brotherhood, and the young family joins the social life of the church on such rights.

Hollywood offered the world its model of "family" without status and obligations, which it tirelessly promotes in all its films, inventing all kinds of romantic scenarios. Under the influence of such theatrical art, the human mind accepts such a model of life, and carnal nature tunes in to the embodiment of this model in one's life or approves of those who already live this way.

Any such sin begins romantically and is very pleasant and desirable, but its consequences, like those of any iniquity, are terrible. The forces of darkness take possession of a person's will and hold the souls of those who have given themselves into the power of Satan and are in the strong chains of slavery to sin.

Fornication and adultery are special sins in God's eyes, and we know biblical stories when the Lord's judgments destroyed entire civilizations by flood or fire from heaven. And from the past of our world one can clearly trace the tendency of the disappearance of various empires at the very peak of their power due to internal corruption of the whole society.

But people do not learn from the mistakes of their ancestors and do not stop doing or approving such evil in our days.

During my life in the Christian world I have unfortunately been a frequent witness to how this sin manifested itself in our midst as well. Fortunately, it is not welcomed at any level, and if discovered, it immediately entails church penalty in the form of exclusion of the sinners from the church brotherhood.

But what to do with young people, children of our brethren, who attend worship services but have not yet become full members of the church? As a rule, most of them study in secular educational institutions and are surrounded by unbelieving peers. Being in such an environment, they absorb "Egyptian sciences" and "Babylonian thinking," and then come to the assembly with this baggage and exert their influence on each other. As a rule, youth set themselves apart and are not willing to accept strangers into their midst. And if such groups are under self-government, then expect problems.

In many churches they understand and see the problem of young people leaving for the world, and try to do everything possible to keep this generation in the church, inventing various projects and opening their own schools and educational institutions.

If we do not teach our youth eternal standards and holy truths, then in this case the enemy of the soul will take care of their education, and he will succeed in this matter.

Often those young people who go into the world are not in a hurry to create happy families but cohabit with their own kind, seeking the meaning of life where it does not exist.

Christ once said interesting words to the Samaritan woman at the well. We read in John 4:17-18: "... You have well said, 'I have no husband,' for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; in that you spoke truly." The Lord does not recognize cohabitation as marriage and does not welcome such relationships, but at the same time He loves sinners and wants to save them.

If you, reader, have such a past, or are now still living in this sin, then understand that the Lord condemns such lawlessness but wants to give you forgiveness, cleansing, and a new heart if you leave this path and choose what the Bible offers.

Voluptuousness brings physical and emotional satisfaction but does not bring the soul closer to God. It is difficult for the flesh to understand why one cannot do what brings pleasure. And the

problem is not in pleasure, but in the fact that a person wants to receive it in an unlawful way.

The semblance of family life will not bring people happiness but will create a prerequisite for emotional disorder. If I am very dear to someone, then why not create a family and live under the protection of God and the state? But people choose the protection of Hollywood and demons and try to build something good in this. At the same time they also want to enter Eternity. But this is wrong. Heaven has its laws and standards that do not change and do not bend under my expectations. I can invent any model of life for myself, but if it does not have a solid biblical foundation, then it will collapse and kill me in its ruins.

Love, happiness, and friendship are what God offers to every person, every family in unlimited quantity. The Lord has much of such good. But for some reason this is often uninteresting; often one wants to get a counterfeit in an unlawful, though quick, way.

This sin has so perverted people's thinking that when the message about God's agape-love sounds, and there is a call about love for one another, you are perceived as a person who wants to bring problems and give brethren a cause for impure thoughts. If I consider something impossible, then I will not try to accomplish it. But God made His holiness accessible in our relationships as well, and love the desired result of our labors. The commandment about love has the power to endow us with this love and teach us the courage to take responsibility for the happiness of our household.

In love there is no fear that you will be left or that they will find another, better than you, but there is much love and happiness and boundless prospects for eternal development.

Questions for Reflection on This Chapter

1. Please read Gen. 34:1-7,25-31; Deut. 23:17-18; Heb. 13:4; Eph. 5:3; 1 Cor. 5:13; 6:9-10,15-20; 1 Kings 15:11-13; 22:46; Prov. 6:26; 22:14; 29:3; Jer. 5:7; Heb. 12:16 in light of this topic.
2. What did you understand from this topic?

3. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
4. Do you consider cohabitation a sin? Do all your neighbors who surround you live in correct family relationships?
5. Did you notice that cohabitation has become very fashionable and popular in the world in our time? Does this tell you something about the nearness of God's judgments?
6. If people who love each other agreed to be husband and wife, but without marriage registration, then what is wrong with that? Rom. 13:10.
7. How does the marital union of the patriarchs' times differ from our time? Is it worth neglecting state laws?
8. Does your church unite newlyweds in family before they go through marriage registration at the registry office?
9. How to relate to those who cohabit and see no problems in this?
10. Why did Jesus pardon and not punish the woman caught in her fornication? John 8:2-11.
11. Should we hate sinners and punish them?
12. What should those do who, having cohabited with a friend for a long time outside marriage, believed in Christ and decided to live anew?
13. Is it necessary before baptism to be interested in the family status of the person being baptized and understand how he is going to build his personal life, having become a member of the church?
14. Why is it necessary to exclude fornicators from church brotherhood? 1 Cor. 5:13.
15. Do fornicating people have hope for Eternal life? If yes, then what is expected of them?

A Pig in a Poke

In the Middle Ages, people traded with each other, offering at the market what they themselves grew and produced. When selling small livestock, they did not pack it in cardboard boxes or special containers, but put the goods in a sack and gave it to the buyer. Some fraudsters used this rule for themselves and handed over instead of the purchased livestock a sack with a cat, which had no value and immediately ran away when released into the light.

It turned out that when you bought goods, you did not know what was in the sack, but believed that it contained something necessary, and did not doubt the seller's honesty.

Creating a family and deciding to love one another are actions similar in many principles, features, and characteristics. Choosing a candidate for the role of friend, I do not know what that person represents who henceforth becomes close to me. And he, in turn, does not know me. And in this mutual ignorance we begin to build relationships, discovering for ourselves the world of a new life friend, allowing our heart to open as well.

Hasty marriages are dangerous because you do not know what is in the sack of the human heart and what animal lives there. And this can be determined only when, in the presence of trust, this heart begins to open for you, and you get full access to its depths.

Knowing each other requires a lot of time spent together, and the desire to love one another makes this knowledge purposeful and interesting.

When two people wishing to enter marriage move to personal contact and allow themselves to hug and kiss each other, then all their knowledge is reduced to the area of feelings and pleasures that require constant repetition and variety. In such a worldview it is impossible to understand the character of the person with whom you are dealing. Your friend is perceived as a center of pleasure, who himself receives pleasure from you.

And a firm conviction is created that this celebration will continue for a lifetime, therefore a family can be created with this person. As a result, I do not know what is in the "sack," and with faith that there is something good there, I carry my goods with joy, anticipating how I will use it upon arriving home. Perhaps the seller was honest and handed me the best and most valuable in his eyes.

Ignorance in knowing a friend will not make me a wise person, although my ability to bring him temporary pleasure with my courtship can be very romantic.

When I soberly approach important questions in my life and understand that I need to create a family because someone has appeared who by all appearances is not against mutual relations, I should be guided in such cases by wisdom and ask for it from God. They say that with a dear one even paradise is in a hut. And more advanced people add: "if the dear one is an attaché."

When I am asked to build something or give a decent appearance to what is in a terrible state, then I ask to be given a plan that will clearly indicate to me the final goal of my work and what I should achieve. I am not expected to do in a couple of days what will take long months of interesting work. But I choose the production process myself, having in my mind knowledge of construction laws, industrial norms and regulations. My customers, observing me, eventually understand that they have acquired not "a pig in a poke," but one who knows how to turn their dream into reality and is engaged in this from morning to evening.

Everyone who plans to create a family wants to be happy in this union. But when it comes to a specific person, you often see how wisdom in building this enterprise goes into the perspective of being in demand sometime in the future, and feelings and mood are given free rein.

Letting each other into our lives, we allow all kinds of disagreements, disappointments, disputes, and other negativity, in order to see what we should get rid of now so as not to allow

it in the future. To know your friend, for whom there are serious plans, it is necessary to tune in to a prolonged period of communication and spending time in conversations and joint affairs.

In one day spent together, something, of course, will be revealed, but you will not understand with whom you are dealing. If we take only one month as a sufficient period for close acquaintance, then this is very little to comprehensively study a person and open up oneself. Six months is better than one month, but six months will not reveal much either.

It is considered that for a more complete acquaintance with a friend it is best to go through with him all the seasons, holidays, and events that occur in a year. Of course, if I have short communication once a month, then even a year will be little. But if we are not afraid to share with each other the secrets of our souls and spend enough time in communication, then in one year we will learn quite a lot about each other.

If we have developed a firm understanding that we suit each other as members of one family, and we decide on this union, then it is worth spending time in planning married life, so that it too does not turn out to be "a pig in a poke," which in fear will run away from us when released into freedom. Plans can always be changed depending on circumstances, but if there are none, then it is unclear what we will build together and where we will come in our case.

In frequent friendly and prolonged time together, any heart opens up to a friend, and you cannot play some role but become yourself. Being yourself is honest and right. But not all of us know how to do this and not all know what this should look like.

Love and acceptance in friendship gives us a great advantage not to be afraid to open our soul but to share what overflows it. But my heart becomes a promising field with good soil for growing those seeds of love that my friend will plant in it. In our love for one another I can become what I would never have become if my friend had not been engaged in knowing me and

studying the depths of my heart, offering me his innovative ideas for my better development and prosperity.

The Lord sees how people approach the important questions of their lives, and how they want to receive from Him what does not become available to everyone simply, like goods on sale. A wise approach to one's life and thirst for God's participation in it gives God the power to apply His hand to our plans and affirm them, embodying them into reality.

In any family and friendship there must be a strong triangle of close relationships: the Lord, I, and friend. And this triangle is not built in one day, and it will withstand all trials, preserving its form under any onslaught, if our mutual love glues us into one whole.

Although we need time to know each other in order to make some important decisions, this knowledge does not end even when we have begun to act in accordance with our decision. We are dealing with the eternal science of researching the friend's heart, which will constantly amaze us with its interesting laws and delight our hearts with new discoveries.

If we plant love in our relationships, then we will reap it with profit and will feed each other with it all our lives.

Questions for Reflection on This Chapter

1. Please read 1 Cor. 13:12; Phil. 1:9-10; Matt. 12:33; Rom. 12:1-3; Prov. 2:10-19; 3:1-6,35; 5:1-6; 8:10-12; 11:16; 30:21-23 in light of this topic.
2. What did you understand from this topic?
3. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
4. Is it important to get to know a person better before offering or agreeing to serious relationships?
5. What to do if you acquired a friend for long relationships, and then realized that he does not suit you?
6. Do you think that "a pig in a poke" when creating a family is a tragedy for life?
7. What prevents people from getting to know each other better before undertaking something important?

8. Do you think that sensual pleasures can become an obstacle in knowing a person's character? If yes, what kind of obstacle can they be?
9. Does the Bible give a prohibition on kissing and frank hugging of people in love before their marriage? If not, then why is it still undesirable to experiment with this?
10. What benefit will knowing a friend before creating a family bring?
11. Is it worth knowing each other in marriage too? Why do this if the family has already been established?
12. Can a parallel be drawn between the verse from John 17:3 and relationships in the family?
13. What did Solomon mean when he wrote such words from Eccl. 7:26: "And I find more bitter than death the woman whose heart is snares and nets, whose hands are fetters. He who pleases God shall escape from her, but the sinner shall be trapped by her."? And then he also added in verse 28: "Which my soul still seeks but I cannot find: One man among a thousand I have found, but a woman among all these I have not found." Are all women really so bad?
14. Can a person's feelings guide his reason when making decisions about creating a happy family?
15. Is a happy family an accident or a wise approach of two wise people to the question of its creation?

The Biochemistry of Friendship

When the Lord created man, every detail of our structure was thought through, starting from the smallest quark and atom, of which all bodily molecules and cells consist. Every millimeter of the human body harmoniously fits into the overall design and very successfully communicates with all other organs, composing and representing one person. In this diversity of everything, in the amazing complexity of all kinds of internal processes, a harmonious combination and interaction of spirit, soul, and body is noticed.

Breathing makes us alive and feeds our bodies with food from outside. Our thoughts and feelings help us choose a life path, and the body adjusts to our choice and develops within the framework that we or circumstances establish.

Inside me there are certain comrades called hormones. They react very quickly to what is happening around. In some amazing way they are closely connected with all my senses, and also control my every thought in order to react timely and correctly to what is happening in my head.

If I see a lion approaching me who feels like a "tourist" and sees in me "the tourist's breakfast," then my adrenal glands begin to produce so much adrenaline that I can very quickly and deftly climb a tall tree and be there as long as the lion does not get tired of waiting for me below.

All types of hormones are given to us with a specific purpose. Dopamine is responsible for stimulating the pleasure center. Endorphin gladdens the heart and softens pain. Insulin regulates carbohydrate metabolism and utilizes excess glucose. Serotonin creates a good mood for me and brings happiness. Melatonin regulates the body's circadian rhythms and is a powerful antioxidant that restores body functions during sleep. Testosterone is responsible for sexual attraction and promotes the development of bone and muscle tissue. Cortisol protects the body from the destructive influence of stress and regulates blood pressure.

All this and much more is in me under the general name "human."

The influence of my internal processes on my mind and my mood, as well as the influence of my mind on my inner world, is mutual, like a road with two-way traffic, where there are rules and laws.

Choosing happiness, I can feel very bad under the influence of the nature of my hormones. But, declaring the chosen direction of my life in a new day, I begin to experience amazing processes of happy reaction to what is happening around.

Choosing love, I can be indignant at injustice and hate my offender. But this path opens the door to God's Spirit, and my feelings are restructured under the chosen direction, and I love from a pure heart, rejoicing in the victory won.

Choosing love for one another, today I can be at the peak of dopamine, and in a couple of days this surge will subside, and the flesh will let me know that I went too far with such a decision and acted hastily. But I choose love for a friend and confidently go in this direction, calling for power from Above, and it comes. And I love a friend at all times.

Communicating with a friend, I experience various hormonal processes inside myself that can have an unexpected surge or subside. And my friend experiences something similar, but in his own way. And if the friend is a woman, then it must be taken into account that once a month she has cycles of blood purification, and this can very strongly and inadequately affect her behavior and surprise by this.

It is also worth considering that in friendship with the opposite sex, sexual attraction may arise, which under the influence of appropriate hormones is capable of taking control of a person's will and causing many troubles.

The apostle Paul saw the action of such laws within himself and exclaimed: "O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" Rom. 7:24.

My life principles, based on God's Word, help me understand what is happening between us and within us and make the right decisions if there are failures in relationships. Love helps to correct hormonal imbalances. Hormones are obedient to our Savior, and He knows how to restrain or release them. And when we invite Jesus into our love for one another and ask His blessing on this friendship, it is worth believing that He accomplishes everything.

Perhaps we will go through the fire of hormonal hurricanes that will resurrect our carnal man, but love will not allow these storms to develop.

Simple, honest, sincere communication about one's internal experiences will resolve many misunderstandings.

I do not know what is happening in another person's life while he is silent. When I was studying at college at 17 years old, I had to skip a whole day without explanation of absence. My close friend was killed with a knife in a fight, and I was at the funeral all day. And the next day my teacher scolded me and threatened to expel me for absences, and I did not want to justify myself because I was very much experiencing the loss, and I did not care what would happen next. I only wanted to cry, but I silently listened to our class teacher and answered nothing. But when the teacher contacted my mother and she told him everything, he then sincerely apologized to me and until the end of studies no longer bothered me with his intimidations.

Not every friend will share his grief with me, sparing me and protecting me from the extra burden of his problems. But such problems affect the biochemistry of relationships, and one should not be afraid of this. The prayer of faith can solve and settle very much of the incomprehensible. And confidential relationships help us bear each other's burdens and cheerfully, in simplicity of heart, solve many issues.

If I become an intrusive friend even in good things, then one should expect conflict. Although it is impossible to be satiated with love and friendship, but when I do not take into account

the freedom of my friend and fill all his personal space with myself, he will definitely not like this, and at some point he will want to rest from me. Therefore, one should always ask permission for one's close presence in the life of a dear person, even if he calls you to be near at all times. "Seldom set foot in your neighbor's house, lest he become weary of you and hate you" Prov. 25:17.

Even in Eternity each of us will have our own Eternal personal dwelling, that habitation in which I myself will be the master, and no one will prevent me from remaining alone for solitude, reflection, and prayer.

It happens that, communicating with a friend, I hear or speak words of love and friendship, and during these words something interesting happens inside me. Happiness hormones begin to go off the scale and I want to jump. And the same words for another or from the lips of another person are perceived calmly. Why does this happen? I do not want to be a hypocrite, but my biochemistry decides to react this way.

It happens that with someone you shook hands and forgot, and after a dear friend you do not even want to wash your hand to preserve the joy of experiencing the meeting.

But no matter how I feel under the influence of my comrades, everything must be under the control of reason, and reason under the control of Jesus.

Questions for Reflection on This Chapter

1. Please read Rom. 7:14-25; 2 Sam. 13:1-17; Prov. 17:22; Ps. 42:5-6; 92:6; 139:13-18,23-24; Gen. 1:27; Matt. 12:15; 24:12; Rev. 3:21 in light of this chapter.
2. What did you understand from this topic?
3. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
4. Do you believe that your hormones can affect your mood and behavior?
5. Is it bad that my organs react to events in their own way and not as I want?
6. Do you think your hormones protect your body and psyche from attacks from outside?

7. Is it worth managing one's mood oneself or is it better to let it manage you?
8. Do you know "people of mood" who today are cheerful without reason, and the next day can be severe without any grounds? What may be the reason for such fluctuations?
9. Have you experienced the following? Everything is good in your life, but "cats are scratching at your soul." And this cannot be explained logically.
10. Is it worth remembering in love for one another about the influence of hormones on a person's will and reason?
11. Can a person's will manage mood?
12. If I see in myself "another law" and want to cry out: "O wretched man that I am!", should I despair, or is there Power from above that will support and give victory?
13. In the book 2 Sam. 13:1-17 the action of hormones on Amnon's will is described. Is such a thing possible in our days or in your life?
14. Will the overcomer from Rev. 3:21 be an overcomer over his flesh?
15. Can my internal processes lead me away from God?

Rose-Colored Glasses

I often heard the expression "put on rose-colored glasses" and did not understand why specifically rose-colored. Once rose-tinted glasses fell into my hands, and I decided to look at the world with different eyes. Everything appeared to my gaze in an unreal form. Although the outlines of objects did not change, their color significantly paled and became unnatural. In reality, all things look much more beautiful.

If it is said about someone that he looks at the world through rose-colored glasses, this means that the person has lost the reality of life and wants to see everything through the eyes of absolute exaggeration of positive factors, while not paying attention to real negativity. We do not call for seeking out negative sides in people, but if they exist and are very noticeable, then they should also be taken into account.

The absence of an objective assessment of existing reality is not a wise approach to life. Our world is full of all kinds of surprises and traps, and one should pay attention to surrounding dangers and warnings, even if I am under the best protection. This rule applies to all spheres of life and, of course, extends to the area of interpersonal relationships, because the human heart is deceitful and extremely corrupted.

Fraudsters are those people who try under the guise of a good deed to gain the trust of naive people in order to take possession of their bodies, money, or property. As a result of such deception, people's hearts harden toward any good deed, and they stop trusting anyone.

Rose-colored glasses are not a body part from which it is impossible to get rid, but a feature of my consciousness that distorts the true essence of things.

About love it is written that it covers all things and believes all things, and if I do not understand what love is, then I risk becoming another victim of fraudsters, justifying my mistake by the fact that I trusted unfamiliar people, relying on their word and not trying to verify what was offered to me.

In the relationship of two people in love with each other there is no hidden meaning of deliberate deception, but there is a danger that they, under the influence of sensual experiences or prospective changes in their lives, will put on rose-colored glasses and begin to see the goal of their friendship, not paying attention to what the person represents. Tender words, affectionate touches, tactful courtesy, unconditional kindness, emanating from an unsanctified heart, enchant the consciousness of the friendship partner, and he ceases to see the bad that also manifests itself in the friend's behavior.

Love sees everything. It is impossible to hide from it the true state of the heart. But with all this, it does not try to use negative knowledge to reject a person or cause him harm. Love consciously seeks good qualities of the soul and clings to them, wanting to engage in their research and development, perfectly understanding what the person represents as a whole.

When lonely people, getting acquainted with such lonely representatives of the opposite sex, set as a goal the creation of a family, thinking that they risk missing their chance and lifelong vegetating in loneliness, then, having such a goal, it is very difficult to understand the objectivity of the situation and be quite sober in one's thoughts and feelings. And there are such people who, under the pretext of creating a family, want to take possession of the partner's body before entering marriage and are ready to promise golden mountains and their heart, explaining their attraction by unconditional love that is not able to wait so long and is ready to get ahead of events, just to manifest itself in all its fullness. And "rose-colored glasses" present all this in unnatural colors of long-term perspectives.

Unfortunately, "rose-colored thinking" has become an integral attribute of our time. And Hollywood quite successfully advertises such relationships between people, not initiating naive representatives of humanity into the bitter consequences of such a worldview.

Creating a family is the most responsible enterprise in a person's life. In these relationships he builds not only his own beautiful future, but also the future of his life companion, his

offspring, and that environment that will be formed around this union. The choice of a life companion is very important in this construction, and it is desirable to involve specialists in this area in this process so that they soberly evaluate the work being done and make appropriate corrections.

I have been working in the construction field for about 30 years and know what it is. A person who approaches construction for the first time, having only strength and enthusiasm, is a very dangerous worker who cannot be entrusted with responsible tasks, otherwise something irreparable may happen. If a trained employee comes to the firm, having appropriate qualifications and clearance to work, then I understand that his knowledge will help foresee many mistakes and not allow them. And yet, before entrusting anything to an unfamiliar specialist, I first check his knowledge and abilities in a practical approach.

I think that any sphere of human life activity has wise organization, but when building a family this wisdom evaporates somewhere, and we see the result — unhappy families, divorces, and children needed by no one. But all this could have been avoided if we had removed the "rose-colored glasses" in time and assessed the situation soberly. Of course, not everything is the fault of "rose-colored thinking," but this factor should not be excluded from the rules either.

When I did not understand the features of creating a family, then for me any people in love were a symbol of future happiness, because that is what Hollywood says. And my question was: "When is the wedding? Will you invite me?" But life teaches many things and helps to evaluate them objectively and comprehensively.

Of course, there is also another foolishness, when people put on "black glasses" and see in every friend solid shortcomings against the background of their imaginary "holiness." Here it is already difficult to object to something and somehow gain the trust of such a person. But love can work a miracle for such a type of thinking too, if the person understands that without love he is nothing.

Sincere prayer of faith and a request for the Lord to choose and show the right and proper person solve many problems much earlier than they begin. Counsel with the Lord in any relationship will never be superfluous. God shows us those with whom we are dealing, He creates situations where a person's character manifests itself, and I myself open up to a friend and learn more about myself when God is in our relationship.

God's task is not to find two ideal partners for marriage and unite them in a family, but to teach two egoists to love each other, teach them to care for their neighbor and develop in themselves those qualities of soul that will bring blessing to others.

If I see the imperfection of my partner and decide to love him with this feature, then this is not "rose-colored thinking," but my conscious choice, which will give me strength to cover with love what will manifest itself in a foolish light.

But what one should not put up with is the sinful vices of a candidate for family. When the Lord clearly showed that a person has an obsession or addiction to sin and lives according to the flesh, then in this situation it is necessary to be sober in planning future relationships and it is better to stop them immediately, even if this will cause pain. But "rose-colored glasses" enchant, and one does not want to take them off.

Questions for Reflection on This Chapter

1. Please read Prov. 8:5; 19:14; 22:3; 31:30; 1 Cor. 13:7-10; Matt. 10:16; Ps. 119:18; Gen. 3:7; Matt. 20:32-33; John 9:39-41; Prov. 1:7-9,29-33; 2:10-19; 3:5-8 in light of this topic.
2. What did you understand from this topic?
3. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
4. What are "rose-colored glasses" in your understanding?
5. Is it always bad to have "rose-colored glasses," or does it sometimes even help or save from something?
6. Why is it necessary when choosing a life companion to see all sides of the relationship and character of your future half?

7. Do you think that "a pig in a poke" with "rose-colored glasses" on are good harbingers of future happiness?
8. Can wisdom oppose itself to "rose-colored thinking"? If yes, in what way?
9. How can I understand that I see the situation in a real light without any "glasses"?
10. Have you encountered people in love who built their relationships in a "rosy light" and on this basis created a family?
11. In what "glasses" was your family created?
12. Do you think that if you ask God for wisdom in understanding and seeing the character of the one with whom you plan to create a family, will He give it?
13. Is God interested in us soberly approaching the choice of a life companion?
14. What to do if "rose-colored glasses" bring me true pleasure in relationships, and without them everything is very gray and boring?
15. What is the difference between love and conscious unwillingness to notice a person's vices?

The Kind Hands of a Friend

My friend and I have mutual love. The awareness that I am a friend gives me confidence that the one to whom I am a friend loves me from a pure heart and does this with all his soul. Jesus by His example teaches us such a relationship and gives me faith that we are also loved by Him. But in earthly friendship we can visibly show how such love can exist in the world.

At the very beginning of our mutual relationship, all my hormones come alive inside me and bring me so much joy and inspiration from the novelty of what is happening that my whole life turns into one continuous celebration. It seems to me that I have gotten to Heaven, from which I will never descend. And the love between me and my friend is so unusual and beautiful that I do not want to leave this happiness. And with all this sounds a constant prayer of gratitude for all God's blessings that are contained in obedience to the commandment about love for one another.

My pleasure center received what it desired, and my soul experienced complete satisfaction from the friendly touch to my heart.

Days pass, and our love for one another grows stronger, and my internal experiences move into the stage of stable work. The novelty of relationships leaves, opening the way to everyday constancy, in which there is no longer a celebration, but there is that firm stability that relies not on fleeting feelings and emotions, but on a solid principle taking its origin from God's Word. I understand that the love between us is eternal, and the friendship that was born once has a very deep foundation and rests in God's hand. And it is precisely this calm confidence that begins to form between us the strongest ties that day by day grow stronger, never to break.

Sometimes in our heartfelt communication another hormonal surge slips through, to decorate the relationship with its influence and bring some emotional coloring to our friendship, but the mind has already gone far enough and so firmly

established my will on heavenly principles that any hormonal changes or their absence will no longer be able to shake us or destroy anything between us.

I do not always have a friend nearby and can touch or hug him. If I were looking only for in-person friends, then perhaps it would take me a very long time to get to this. But modern means of communication and virtual communities allow me to very quickly find those who are close to me in spirit and have close relationships with Jesus. This is one of the features of our time that should be taken into account, and it must be used for the benefit of the soul.

Not all friends may have ideal family conditions where I can be warmly welcomed into their home. But thanks to modern communication, I can very quickly get into a friend's heart, bypassing many distances, obstacles, and borders, establishing myself in this heart forever.

The recent meeting of friends from our School showed how simple and joyful it is to see and receive those with whom you have already united and grown close spiritually, without communicating with this person in person.

The hands of a friend are able to hug you, bypassing huge distances, and perform the same comfort and healing as if this friend were nearby.

Look, where is Jesus physically located now? Very far away, where no one from among people will ever be able to get. But at the same time, through the Holy Spirit, the Lord is near all who call upon Him and who want to have very close relationships with Him. And we accept such an approach by faith and receive real answers to all our needs and expectations.

But when the conversation turns to earthly relationships, many tune themselves to in-person relationships and categorically do not want to have anything virtual, losing many advantages in this way and not receiving what they desire. And the heart needs a friend who can touch the strings of your soul and play a quiet melody of love, understandable to both of you.

Love cannot be touched with hands, and not all people can be touched. The kind hands of a friend are able to overcome any distances to touch my soul precisely when it very much needs this and is open to such relationships. The Lord knows the needs of my friends and very often prompts me to do something for them just like that, spontaneously, but from all my soul. And this works.

And how pleasant it is to perform work, knowing that there are people who are waiting for what will come out of your hands, so that they can immediately receive it and together with you have joy from such a blessing.

Take, for example, these lessons. They come out in real time, on certain days. And someone is waiting for this, like hot pies, to share with me the joy of tasting new revelations and thank God for it. I really like Christ's words about this activity. We read in Matt. 24:45-46: "Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing." And our joint joy from the common spiritual meal brings our hearts closer, and the message of love and friendship that we have been studying for so many years unites us into one big friendly family.

In my practice of acquiring virtual friends with whom I had to enter into close relationships, I have never once experienced anyone being disappointed in our friendship at a personal meeting.

The kind hands of a friend are always open to support you in a difficult moment with their prayers, kind words, and heartfelt joy. A friend feels your heart and is always ready to participate in all your plans if there is an acute need for this.

It happens that I do not need so much help from a friend as the awareness that I am needed by someone, I bring benefit and joy to someone. And if I know that someone loves me from a pure heart, then this provides such powerful support in many matters that I do not even need the words of this friend. The very understanding that I am loved endows me with wings, and

I can accomplish very much, for which in another case there would be neither desire nor strength.

And what do my kind hands do with my friends? I have rich experience of how many blessings come into the lives of people with whom you share from all your heart what you receive from God. It is always so joyful for me to take love from Heaven and, passing it through my heart, pour into the friend's life streams of God's blessings, adding to them my human qualities of soul and material goods. It is so pleasant to observe this.

How sometimes it is difficult to convey to my friends a simple truth about how I love them. For some, these are simple words without meaning, but I do not throw around such phrases just like that. And if I have said something like this, then I give a full account that I have this love in my heart.

I really like being a conductor of God's love. I take it from above to give it further, and observe those who received it. They think it is mine and are surprised at where I have so much. And I modestly point to the True Source, but for some reason friends decide that I am to blame and am rich with such abundance. As a result, we agree that it is all God's, and without Him we can do nothing. And God really likes to hug all of us at all times with our hands.

Questions for Reflection on This Chapter

1. Please read Prov. 17:17; 27:9; John 13:34-35; 1 Pet. 1:22; 1 John 4:16; Jer. 31:3; Col. 1:16-23; 1 Thess. 3:12; Eph. 4:11-16; Phil. 2:5; Rom. 12:9-10; 13:10 in light of this chapter.
2. What did you understand from this topic?
3. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
4. Can your earthly friend be a blessing to you for all your life?
5. Is there something in love for one another that this world cannot give?
6. Must love for one another be mutual, or is my one-sided decision enough, and the friend will someday love me too?
7. Does the verse from Amos 3:3 say something about our friendship? Amos 3:3: "Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?"

8. Does the Lord act in our friendship through our hands and mouths?
9. Does Jesus want to reveal His character to the world through our relationships with one another?
10. Do you think that to love one another is very difficult?
11. What can be said to a person who considers that to love a friend is hard work and an unbearable burden?
12. Have you had it happen that you want to express your love in words, but there are no suitable words?
13. Has Jesus ever hugged you with the hands of your friends?
14. Have you learned in this School to love one another?
15. Have you received enough light about love for one another to begin practicing it?

Do I Really Need This?

No matter how much I want to create a family, no matter how much I dream that two are better than one, still it is worth asking myself an honest question: "Do I really need this?"

No matter how good the phrase "family life" sounds, no matter how much I strive to gain this happiness, it is necessary to decide and honestly answer myself whether I need this.

I do not know what awaits me in the future, and who my life companion will turn out to be. I do not know what I will become in a few years, and what motive drives me now in creating a family. If I want to have a family only for the sake of family, because my relatives or immediate environment are putting pressure on me, then my motive will be wrong. If I strive to create a family for the sake of family, for the sake of children, for the sake of a non-lonely future, then I should take into account that my interests may change with certain family difficulties of life. To be under one roof with a person you do not know or do not love all your life is quite risky. The Lord knows what will bring me happiness, but whether I need it, I must decide myself.

We are given a warning about difficult times at the very end of history. Will my family be able to be a blessing to me in these days? I do not know. And will I be able to endure those events that will also touch my family life? I have many questions to which there are no direct answers in the Bible.

We are not given a prohibition on creating a family. The Lord considers my choice and blesses me in the decision I make. He will bless my family if I decide to create it. He will also bless me in my loneliness if I wish to remain so. For God there is no difficulty in preserving me alone or together with my wife from all evil, when we both want this. Therefore, we are not forbidden to marry or get married. But we do not know what the last time is preparing for us, and what trials await us. The Spirit of Prophecy warns believers that in the last time of

earth's history, families should not be created, because this may present certain difficulties.

Even regarding the very last time, we do not have special commands not to create families.

And will I be a blessing to my life companion? Why do I need a family now? Will I actually find the one with whom I will link my fate, whom I will care for all my life, get to know her better, constantly think about her happiness, study her character at all times and share my discoveries with this person dear to me? Will she appreciate such a relationship? Will she seek the same for me? What will we build together in our family?

Jesus said in the message from Matt. 24:19: "But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days!" And what is woe? This is when some tragedy happens in my life. Perhaps in the last days the Lord will lay to rest many of our children and those people who will not be able to endure the time of trouble. The Spirit of Prophecy confirms this thought. When I lose a small child, this brings me an extraordinary amount of grief that overshadows my life. When planning a family, I do not want to think about the death of future children, but it is worth considering what time we live in.

The state policy of our countries is aimed at our children. We cannot rule over a child as we want. At a certain time he will have to go to an Egyptian school and receive a secular education in order to work for the world, and the studied sciences may damage his mind and make him unfit for eternal life. Children are a gift from the Lord. And all our life, all hopes are invested in them, our future is enclosed in them. But we do not know who they will become, living in this fallen and corrupted world. Am I ready to sacrifice what I will have to give to this little person? Will I take responsibility to leave everything for my family, for my children, for our family happiness?

And do I have the correct understanding of a happy family and how God wants to see it? Will I be that friend who loves at all times and who will become a blessing to my other half?

Will I be able to be a warrior of Christ if I decide to remain alone? What ministry for God have I chosen for myself? And what future will God give me in response to my loneliness?

There are very many questions and all kinds of assumptions to which it is worth giving an honest answer to oneself. Getting to know a person better, I still do not know with whom I am going to create a family. Feelings are not a very reliable advisor in such an important matter. Will there be mutual love between us? Will I be able to love the one who, perhaps, will not experience happiness from my presence with her under one roof?

To link one's life with a person who is as lonely as you is not the best decision if we do not know each other and we are simply tired of living alone. My innate selfishness will not make another person better or happier if I do not ask for God's blessing on these changes. Love will not come into my life just like that, only because I got married. It must be wanted and asked for, and sometimes it must be begged for, in order to perform good deeds with correct motives. Life with Christ teaches me many important things.

Love for one another prompts me to very correct and beautiful behavior. I understand the following. If we are to create a family, then for this it is necessary first to love one another according to the commandment, and then, if the heart will hint to you about changing your status and your friend will be experiencing the same thing, then together something can be undertaken.

It is worth asking the following question: "And why do you need me?" to your candidate for family life as well. It may turn out that you are full of feelings and prospects, and he simply does not need all this, and he only wants to love you and live in these beautiful mutual relationships, without binding himself with family obligations.

God does not call us for friends of the opposite sex who love one another to create families. It is not for this purpose that this new commandment is given to us. And if I propose to a

sister to fulfill this commandment, this does not mean that I plan to create a happy family with her or hint to her about interesting circumstances in the future. One should not reduce God's plan to personal interests. God does not forbid us to marry and get married when there is mutual love between us.

If I plan to love a friend of the opposite sex only with the goal of creating a happy family in the future, then by this I can dishonor the name of Jesus, applying this commandment only for my personal interests. The Lord knows my deceitful heart, how corrupted it is, and therefore will always test me, revealing to me the true motives of my good deeds.

But when I ask myself such a question, ask it honestly, ask this same question to God, ask this question to a loved one, then I can hear the correct answer that will put everything in its place.

Perhaps a friend who did not want to create a family will nevertheless decide on this step in order to always be near and help me accomplish our salvation, glorifying God in this union.

Or maybe this is all we need?

Questions for Reflection on This Chapter

1. Please read John 1:38; Gal. 5:13-15; Gen. 2:18; Eccl. 4:9-12; Prov. 12:4; 14:1; 19:13-14; 27:15; 31:30; 1 Cor. 7:32-40; 11:11-12; Eph. 5:33; Rev. 19:7; Gal. 5:1 in light of this topic.
2. What new things did you learn from this lesson?
3. What does the Bible say about human freedom of choice?
4. Can the main question of this lesson be applied to other spheres of life?
5. Is it bad to ask yourself and a friend the question: "Do you need this?"
6. Did Jesus ask you such a question: "What do you want?" from John 1:38.
7. When I understand that I do not need someone as a family member, is it worth further developing the relationship?
8. Can my flesh convince me that I do not need spiritual friends? If yes, should I listen to this?

9. If I really need a friend dear to my heart, is it worth convincing myself that I do not need this?
10. Does family impose additional responsibility on a person?
11. Should one link one's life with someone who does not need you?
12. How to understand whether I need the whole person or only his body, or property, or fame, or...?
13. What to do if we understood that we need each other, and we really need this?
14. Is it even worth asking yourself such questions?
15. Will love help me give the correct answer to such complex questions?

Why Am I Alone?

In God's church many sisters live in loneliness and cannot create a family. Perhaps someone is satisfied with this, but for someone this state of affairs becomes a heavy burden and plunges into despair.

This condition has many causes that should be identified and, if necessary, the situation changed.

1. The decision to be alone and accomplish one's salvation without a life companion. If a sister is set on the fact that she does not need anyone, and this state of affairs suits her, then this is not a sin, but her full right. And one should not ridicule such people.
2. Unsociability. If a woman is constantly at home, at work, and at church, and she goes nowhere else, then how will her desired spouse learn about her? He will not come to her home to offer his hand and heart, and her workplace is not the best field for building relationships. And during worship all parishioners are set on worshiping God, not on creating a family. Perhaps active participation in social projects or trips to public events will expand favorable opportunities, but it is not at all necessary that you will meet there someone who will notice you.
3. The girl is very serious. A smile and cheerfulness are like a magnet that attracts attention and disposes to communication. When a man sees a girl who outwardly suits him, then he is interested not only in external beauty, but also in the inner world of the woman, which very well expresses itself in the form of a joyful spirit and mood. A serious face inspires in a potential candidate the thought that he has no chance of receiving anything good from this serious "loneliness," and the man prefers not to risk. Fear of appearing frivolous, wanting to get acquainted, or fear of being rejected, hold many people back from subsequent actions. And to create a family with a girl who does not know how to rejoice is a big risk of plunging into dreary everyday life. A woman's sincere smile drives away all fears

and gives chances for success to those who, perhaps, are looking for a suitable candidate.

4. A woman does not try to understand a man and accept that this is a completely different planet with absolutely different thinking, views, and values. She does not consider his wishes, opinion, and feelings, and wants more to talk about herself and what interests her. The young man understands that as a person he is indifferent to her, and backs away. He needs a friend for life who will understand, respect, and value him.
5. The girl is firmly attached to her girlfriend or girlfriends, and it is impossible to catch her alone. And even when there is a brave soul who decides to get acquainted with her and make his interest in her clear, she does not want to leave her girlfriends and drags them into the new acquaintance, making it clear that she is not going to part with anyone for the sake of a new friend. The man then understands that his efforts to reach the heart of the desired soul must be tripled, since the risk of being rejected increases, and the girlfriend's opinion can destroy all the good that the inexperienced candidate for friend can offer.
6. Excessive attachment of the girl to one of the parents. If parents are healthy and can take care of themselves, then they do not need the care of their daughter and must teach her independence from them. Young men, as a rule, are not set on taking as a wife a girl with her mother or father. They want to build relationships one on one and decide themselves what their family will be like and where they will live.

A woman's dependence on the opinion of father or mother can push away a potential partner, as he understands that against the opinion and will of parents he will not be able to hold out for long, so the man prefers not to link his life with such a family.

1. Haste. A woman is always hurrying somewhere, and it is simply impossible to keep up with her. She has no time and desire to stop, postpone her important matters and just be and communicate with the one to whom she has become

interesting. She does not understand what he needs and why he cannot keep pace with her in life and be her helper in solving her daily tasks. It is not characteristic of men to run after girls and catch up with them in their cares. They are ready to drag the harness of family cares themselves, but for this they need not a leader, but a helper.

2. Untidiness in appearance and unwillingness to take care of oneself. A man loves with his eyes and it is important for him how his chosen one looks. Even if she has a kind heart, but she is a slob, then the second will be a more weighty argument for breaking off the relationship. To be neat does not mean to have a lot of cosmetics, expensive clothes, and visit beauty salons. Cleanliness of body, combed hair, decent clothing selected with taste and according to the season, order and cleanliness in your dwelling—all this should be a natural addition to a girl. It is pleasant for a man to understand that for him you will continue to live in cleanliness and beauty even when you create a family with him.
3. Lack of femininity. A lonely woman sometimes has to work hard and build her life by her own strength, and this can make her masculine and independent, which she does not try to hide. A man does not need a "general in a skirt" who does not feel the need for a reliable shoulder. He needs the one next to whom he will feel strong and will do everything possible so that she feels good and comfortable behind his back.
4. Categorical religious views. If a girl has a certain model of relationship with God and categorically states that she is not going to change anything for the sake of family, then the young man simply has no chance of competing with the Creator, and he understands that with such a wife he will not be able to be a priest and head in his family. He will not have spiritual authority, so he prefers to seek his happiness with other people.
5. Self-sufficiency. A girl who has managed to achieve and acquire something by her own strength and mind causes wariness in a less experienced man. He understands that to live in someone else's apartment on his wife's salary is not

the best prospect for family happiness. And it will be difficult for him to surprise his girlfriend with his modest earnings and earn authority. She can do everything herself and will manage quite well without him, and he does not want to be an appendage to her self-sufficient way of life.

6. Passionate desire to get married. When this motive guides a woman, this is visible in everything and very much alerts and repels her chosen one. He is not obsessed with the same idea and wants to calmly understand and weigh everything without tension from the girl's side.
7. Esteeming oneself higher, smarter, wiser, and stronger. Pride will not attract worthy attention but will cause disgust.
8. Fear of men. A man is not a monster that has come to ruin your life. They should not be feared, but should be loved, valued, and respected.
9. Lack of interest and desire to get acquainted and develop relationships. Few will want to spend effort on an indifferent person when there are more open people.
10. Unsuccessful marriage with a previous partner. If a girl's relationship with her husband did not work out or she was rejected by him, which led to divorce, then such a status alerts potential candidates for remarriage. And if the divorce was not because of the husband's infidelity, then the remarriage of this woman is considered a violation of the law and will not have the blessing and approval of the church.
11. Presence of children from a previous marriage. Not every man will dare to take responsibility for the fate of someone else's child. And the children themselves may be jealous of their mother toward an unfamiliar man and hinder her in creating new relationships.
12. Opposite or excessive political views. A man needs a homemaker and helper in the house, not an ideological political armchair expert.

Love helps to destroy all these and other barriers and make your heart more responsive to developing serious relationships. It teaches to love at all times and attracts worthy people, making you a worthy person for creating a happy family.

Questions for Reflection on This Chapter

1. Please read Prov. 30:18-19; 1 Cor. 7:28-38; Eccl. 7:29; Prov. 14:1,18; 15:15; 19:14; 29:23; 31:25,30; Job 31:1; Luke 20:34-36 in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What did you understand from this topic?
4. What other causes that alert or repel men do you know?
5. What to do if you saw a problem of your heart described in this lesson?
6. Do you find the knowledge described in the lesson useful for yourself?
7. Is it worth considering the listed factors in an already established family?
8. Do you know that for all their masculinity, representatives of the strong sex are afraid of making a mistake if they see obstacles or inconsistency with their expectations from the opposite side?
9. Should a girl worry that she is not interesting to anyone as a future wife? Or should she think about what is wrong in her life?
10. Is God interested in creating happy families?
11. Where does the building of family happiness begin?
12. Should a girl understand that the absence of worthy men can also be a reason for her loneliness?
13. Where can one find that person who will be to one's heart and from the Lord?
14. Can the verse from Eccl. 9:11 be applied to our topic? Eccl. 9:11: "I returned and saw under the sun that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to men of understanding, nor favor to men of skill; but time and chance happen to them all."
15. Is family happiness and finding the right person an accident or the consequence of certain laws?

What Is the Way to the Heart?

If you ask people in the audience what is the way to a man's heart, then immediately from several people you will hear the same answer: "Through the stomach!" And for you, most likely, exactly this answer will come first to mind, although you probably will not rush to voice it.

In my life I have heard exactly this definition of the path very many times, and it has become some kind of stereotype in my thinking as well.

I remember, very long ago, when I once again recalled this phrase, I decided to think: "What does my stomach have to do with it?" And I discovered a new world, a spiritual world.

Although I, like any of you, love to eat tasty and healthy food, food and the stomach are not the door to my heart. And if we talk about our physiology, then the intestine does great work in assimilating eaten food, but the path to the heart through it generally interests no one, although it is precisely it that nourishes the heart with useful substances extracted from food.

It is worth remembering that we live in a world where the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life reign, so appetite has power over many and can even guide the mind and will. So it is not surprising that the world loves its own and against this background considers all kinds of paths to the heart.

If you ask the public the question: "What else can the path to a man's heart lie through, besides the stomach?", then most likely you will hear what will correspond to the criteria of the world: through the eyes, sex, entertainment, comfort at home, hobbies, money and so on. All these are not bad things that should be in their place at the right time, but this is not the path that the Lord provided.

And what is the way to a woman's heart? If men begin to answer, then women will immediately be indignant, although they also have needs for tasty food, pleasant words, money,

protection, stability, affection, their own home and other good things.

But if the carnal nature dominates in the heart of a woman, then she too will choose those values that the world offers.

Advertising opens so many new paths to the heart that you are surprised to learn that for the happiness of a wife she needs new laundry detergent or toothpaste from an overseas country.

And the soul languishes in anticipation of someone who has the keys of love and will be able to select them precisely for you, to enter your heart and delight it with sincerity, purity of thoughts, unconditionality and friendliness. And each heart has its own basic language of love, which it understands best, and in which it can very easily open and build relationships.

But there is also the language of circumstances, which may be completely incompatible with the languages of love, but relevant due to the need that has arisen. If I am hungry, then kind words and hugs, although they will bring me joy, will not deprive me of the feeling of hunger. And if my wife has something to feed me with, but treats me only with kind words, then my heart will not respond to such an attitude, although it understands the language of communication very well.

We read in Prov. 15:17: "Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a fatted ox and hatred with it." A house in which there is no love and respect will never warm your heart even with the most exquisite and healthy food. It will always be cold, uncomfortable and unsafe.

A person in whose heart there is no Christ will always incline to worldly criteria and values, as he is on enemy territory without God's protection.

In determining the path to the heart of a man or woman, it is worth considering many temporary, age, social, intellectual and spiritual factors, which in each person manifest differently and are not always stable.

Since we are considering this question within the framework of a happy Christian family, it is worth noting that in this case you

can quite quickly and simply determine what is most to the heart of your other half, and whether you want to give this to them.

The very first step is to ask your family friend what most delights his heart on a permanent basis, and how often he wants to receive this for himself. And when a clear answer is given, lay it on your heart that over time this path to the heart may undergo significant changes, and what opened his heart earlier, today is already considered ordinary, and you need to look for something new. This is the norm of life, and you should not be afraid of it. For example, if you are fed the same tasty salad every day, then sooner or later a moment will come when you want to eat something else, as the tasty salad will no longer be so tasty.

If your spouse has had enough of something, and he is not so proactive in this sphere, then you need to take step number two: ask him what now most delights his heart, and what he wants to have. Listen carefully and follow the statements made.

Of course, if you possess perceptiveness, observation and feel the family atmosphere, then you yourself can determine which path to the heart of the spouse is best, and without asking, do what delights him.

It is important to understand that your common faith in God will always bind you with invisible bonds, and it will be very easy for you to bring the tasty fruit of the Holy Spirit, because the Spirit does not produce inedible cacti. But note that God has a serious competitor for service to himself—this is wealth, (Luke 16:13), which can blind you with its rainbow prospects, taking all your time, strength and interests. Jesus warned that it is not easy for the rich to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, and especially for those who hope in this wealth. But even here all things are possible with God. Luke 18:24-27.

Also remember that evil associations corrupt good morals. 1 Cor. 15:33. If the sphere of your life activity has led you into such an association, and you think that you will have enough strength to resist the influence of evil, then you have already

lost. The world will not repent and will not change, but will swallow you with all your guts, and will not even notice that something happened, and family and spirituality will begin to suffer from this.

I know a person who loves his wife and works like a bee, but in that country there are small salaries, and with this income it is possible only not to die of hunger. And this man has to listen to unpleasant things about himself, and against this background his love is needed by no one.

I know one sister who has a husband mired in business. He thinks only about money and makes it from everything. And she dreams of this person's love for her and is ready for many sacrifices for such a relationship. And the husband does not want to hear anything about this.

I also know such a person who both earns well and also loves his wife and thinks about her happiness. And she is always dissatisfied with everything, grumbles and curses him at every opportunity.

So try to understand what are the paths to the hearts of these people?

When refugees come to our country, then they are happy to tears with any salary, any little thing that you share with them to help them integrate. Time passes, and some have such requests and ambitions that you are surprised where this came from.

But it is also pleasing that with spiritual people everything is more understandable, and their hearts beat in unison with the heart of Jesus, as does yours, and we are all very similar, and we have a common path.

Questions for Reflection on This Chapter

1. Please read: Jer. 17:9; Prov. 4:23; 14:14,30; 15:16-17; 17:1; 27:5; Eccl. 4:9-12; Luke 16:9; Jer. 20:7; Hos. 11:3-4; John 12:32; Ps. 138:23; 1 John 2:16-17 in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What did you understand from this topic?

4. What is the way to your heart?
5. What does the expression "way to the heart" mean?
6. What advantage does knowledge of the way to the heart of my other half give me?
7. What will happen if I myself begin to determine the way to the heart of my life friend and make my settings the main criterion?
8. Why is it so important to know the way to the heart of a family partner?
9. What languages of love do you know?
10. In what languages of love can you speak?
11. Does the Lord know the way to our hearts? How does He use this knowledge?
12. What is the danger if I begin to use worldly criteria for finding the way to the heart of my spouse?
13. Will I be able to make my family life friend happy if I know the way to his heart?
14. Will love suggest which way to the heart is closest to a person?
15. In your life is there someone who knows the way to your heart?

And Where to Find Someone Like That?

If you ask single young people what kind of husband or wife they would like to have, and ask them to be honest and sincere in such a question, then I think the expectations and statements on this topic will be the same for everyone. And I will voice them.

A young girl will put forward the following requirements. A man should be intelligent, wise, cheerful, kind, responsive, strong, athletic, not selfish, prudent, attentive, tender, honest, principled, caring, cheerful, devoted, faithful, loving, friendly, spiritual, dedicated to God. And it would also be good if he were independent and could cook deliciously. And those who are bolder will add to this list also that he be handsome, tall and rich.

Not bad requirements. Considering that such character qualities are approved by the Word of God, and all Eternity will be populated by such people, it is worth wanting this.

And what should a girl be like?

The list of expected qualities will be approximately similar to the above. And young people who study the Scriptures will name several more virtues corresponding to the biblical portrait of the ideal wife. If you undergo training in the School of Agape Love, then the expectations and requirements for a girlfriend from the Lord will become so high that there is a risk of never meeting such a girl.

However, if young people name qualities that they would like to see in their future spouse, does this mean that they want something unrealistic? Should they expect what their heart thirsts for?

Do such people exist at all? We dream about them. We voice their character qualities. We pray about them, but we cannot see them. Yes, undoubtedly, they are all in Hollywood, and it will provide you with such amazing people that it will even be

amazed itself at whom it has in its depths. But one thing is on the screen, and another is in life.

The correct answer for dreamers about such people sounds as follows. There are no such people and cannot be, because everyone has a sinful human nature. And this does not depend on age. But these people can be created and nurtured in your good company through daily dedication of yourself to God.

Let us immediately discard all extremes, vices and sinful addictions that make a person unsuitable for building a happy family, and take a normal young person who, although he has tasted something of life's struggle for survival, is not yet spoiled by this world, and cannot be written off. Somewhere subconsciously he really wants to be a man, make independent decisions and have a woman nearby who will become his helper and inspirer for all the days of their life together. But the truth is that a man is able to become a man only if next to him there is a real woman possessing femininity. In the presence of such a being with pronounced signs of femininity, it is very easy for a man to be masculine, discover his male nature and manifest male character qualities that awakened thanks to the presence of a woman in his life.

In no way do I want to humiliate dear representatives of the fair sex, but now we are talking precisely about that young age in which a good beginning is formed or a stereotypical worldview is laid, which will subsequently guide the processes of all life.

All the desired qualities listed above can be found in people from already established families. Such spouses have passed through the hardships and joys of joint experiences, tragedies and victories, in which those seeking wisdom found it, and those destroying everything with their own hands succeeded in such an approach to life.

When young people only leave their parental home, then although they are big, they are still children who are used to someone caring for them, someone solving various issues, someone doing what they could do themselves. And many expect continuation of such care for themselves from their new

friend, and he is the same egoist who is not accustomed to thinking about your happiness, and does not know how to think about his own.

But God's plan is to mold from two inexperienced people something beautiful with which they could live long and happily.

In building family happiness, the most important task and responsibility lies with the woman, who essentially establishes and forms the principles of relationship development. A woman can do something correctly, guided by intuition or examples from life in her parental home, but still she needs to understand that the man who became or will become her husband is not a girlfriend, not a brother and not even a father, but a completely opposite being who thinks completely differently, sees everything differently and has his own understanding of life, happiness and friendship, different from the female. And the task of a wise wife includes the process of studying male psychology, applying the studied rules in her personal life and grandiose work on her own "I," which will constantly interfere in relationships and destroy something in them.

The greatest and most important task ever set for a woman is the formation of her character in the image and likeness of God. God wants to reveal His image to woman, and He also dreams of restoring this image in her. He most of all wants modern women to become women, those people of the female sex who they were originally conceived and born.

A woman is not only a being of the female gender who outwardly resembles a woman, has distinctive physiological features, possesses refined sensitivity and perceptiveness. But this is also spiritual correspondence to the female image that the Lord placed in every woman so that she would be a woman. Femininity is what the world steals from a woman, making her a fighter for justice and equality. Our Soviet society formed a certain stereotype that we are accustomed to seeing and which should suit us. Capitalism and democracy brought their own values into this image. Freedom of thought and religion supplemented this set with its advantages, and Internet culture

created a completely new type of person of the female sex, who is now trying to get out of these frameworks and somehow be happy.

And with all this the Lord deals, trying to give everything necessary for changes and spiritual growth.

There is nothing terrible when two egoists noticed each other and decided to create something common and build something beautiful from this. They can learn everything if they take God and His principles of love as the basis of their construction. In essence, love is capable of making a woman feminine, and a man courageous and responsible. But this needs to be learned and learned for a long time, many years and many decades.

When I see a happy family, I understand how much they had to go through together, overcome, experience, endure to become like this. And at the beginning they were no better than our young dreamers. Difficulties tempered this family, problems showed them the best paths, crises opened new opportunities for them, and grief made them closer and dearer. And if in all this they asked for God's wisdom, sought God's counsel, were guided by God's principles, then the result will be visible to all and delight many.

And mutual love makes this experience tasty and perfect.

Questions for Reflection on This Chapter

1. Please read: Gen. 1:27; 2:22; Prov. 19:14; 1 Pet. 3:1-13; 1 Tim. 2:8-15; 4:12-16; Eccl. 4:9-12; 11:9-10; Rom. 13:10; Prov. 14:1; 31:10-31; 1 Cor. 7:27-40; 15:10 in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What did you understand from this topic?
4. Where to find a good person for creating a family?
5. Is it possible with God's help and with the help of God's love to mold from any person something beautiful and tasty?
6. Do you think good people in other people's families were born so good, or did they become such by getting into favorable conditions?

7. Is the potential for changes in character development embedded in a person?
8. What role do you think a woman plays in building family happiness?
9. What is femininity?
10. What do you feel when someone teaches that for a woman to be a woman, she needs to be feminine?
11. What does it mean to be feminine? Have you met such people?
12. Why, if there are no such beautiful people in nature as described at the beginning of the lesson, does everyone dream about them and pray, wanting to get exactly such?
13. Are you yourself still capable of changing for the better? If yes, what is needed for this, or what prevents you?
14. Is love capable of working miracles of transformation in a person's life?
15. What exactly does love change in life?

Imperishable Beauty

Beauty is a subjective perception reflecting harmony, attractiveness and the inspiring nature of something, whether it be an object, idea or person. Beauty can be both external and internal, reflecting the depth of the human soul.

We read the apostle Peter's address to married women, 1 Pet. 3:3-4: "Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear—but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious."

I think that such a statement can suit every woman at any age, because it speaks of what is very valued by God, and always.

But when such beauty is present in my family, then this is a special blessing, which, if I appreciate it and understand what it is, will constantly delight me and fill my heart with inexpressible gratitude to God.

The concept of human beauty is subjective, and can be different for all people. The world imposes on us its standards and standards of beauty, and the carnal nature of man gladly accepts what satisfies the lust of the eyes and the pride of life.

To be outwardly beautiful is that need which is embedded in the nature of woman, which gives her inner confidence if she sees herself as such.

Magazine covers, billboards, television and cinema from all sides offer us beautiful facades, sometimes without internal content, and women deceived by the world believe that achieving these standards will make them someone significant in the eyes of others, and they spend a lot of time and money on achieving this beauty.

But the Bible teaches that there is something special and imperishable in a woman that is very valued by God.

The imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit means that true attractiveness is manifested in inner peace, humility and wisdom. These are qualities that are not subject to time and retain their value regardless of circumstances.

Jesus once called Himself thus: "...for I am gentle and lowly in heart..." Matt. 11:29. A gentle spirit was inherent in the Savior, and He gave us an example of with what dignity a gentle and humble person can live among all kinds of dangers, trials and persecutions.

Gentleness does not manifest itself in the company of people who love each other, where everyone is open and does not think evil. It begins to act where it is necessary to show patience, prudence, calmness, control feelings and emotions. Of such people it is said that they will inherit the earth. Matt. 5:5.

By their physiology not all people can look attractive and evoke aesthetic pleasure in others. But there is one very true and tested means that adorns anyone, even the most inconspicuous person, making him bright, radiant and amazingly beautiful. This is a sincere smile.

Want to be beautiful? Smile. Want to always be beautiful? Always smile. Want to be truly beautiful—smile with sincere joy about the one to whom you smile. There is something in a smile that makes any person, and especially a woman, aesthetically beautiful and attractive.

To understand the beauty of a smile, let's look at a face distorted by anger or malice. A more ugly expression is difficult to imagine, even if this person has an attractive appearance. And after such an eruption of internal content, you no longer notice the attractive facade of this person, even if they try to smile.

Why does this happen? Because the peculiarity of the fullness of human beauty lies in the combination of the external appearance and the internal image of a person. And if at first we are attracted by appearance, then with closer acquaintance, when we learn the character, a true image is created, where

the internal content has greater significance than what is outside.

A quiet spirit is the ability of a person to very briefly state the essence of their life position without entering into debates and controversies. This is a calm attitude to controversial issues, where one's view of things is expressed without the desire to prove anything. This is the ability to be silent where your opinion does not interest anyone or will introduce disagreements into communication. This is the understanding that with many words sin is unavoidable. Prov. 10:19.

A quiet spirit does not mean that this person is taciturn, unable to speak much or having an inferiority complex. But this is wisdom from above, which teaches to be brief and concise where it is needed, and talkative and sociable where it is expected. This is the ability to share wise sayings that bring good and joy to listeners, and absolute silence where an accidental foolish word can harm or disappoint someone. We read Prov. 31:26: "She opens her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue."

A gentle spirit is the power from above, allowing one to maintain calm and composure where storms rage, when a person completely relies on God's protection. This is the ability to control the situation without attracting special attention to oneself. This is deep respect for the interlocutor and honoring others above oneself, without compromising one's personal dignity.

Any adequate husband who has in his home a wife with a gentle and quiet spirit will quickly appreciate her inner beauty, will certainly test it for strength, and then will constantly admire it and rejoice at such a gift from the Lord. And if this gift will always be dressed in a festive sincere smile, then in such a house there will be an atmosphere of love and friendship.

I think and know that to be friends with such people is very pleasant, interesting and not difficult. They, like a magnet, draw you to themselves, and then also do not reject you, but are always glad that you exist.

If the Bible calls something precious in God's eyes, then I think attention should be paid to this and one should understand whether this is present in me.

Love has a very good peculiarity. It teaches gentleness and wise silence, without depriving a person of freedom of choice. It endows the heart with wisdom, when one no longer wants to live differently, and it is not necessary.

There are other signs of beauty that Peter did not list in the above verse, but wrote about them in his epistles to believers. Time has passed, and these values have not changed and have not lost their power. And this is the best proof that such peculiarities of the soul are imperishable, and time has no power over them.

Which of you dreams of becoming such a wife? All things are possible to him who believes.

Which of the husbands dreams of having such a beautiful wife? I think everyone who understands what this is about.

Age over the years takes away external attractiveness, but inner beauty does not go anywhere.

I remember one grandmother who smiled incessantly, was constantly glad to see me and shone like the sun. I was always so fascinated by her content that it did not matter what her hairstyle was or how old she was. In the company of this woman it was always warm and cozy, because you understood that nearby is someone who loves you and is very glad to see you. The Lord wants to see such beauty in each of us and has made this possible through the love that He so strives to sell us. And while we are learning this, do not forget to smile more often.

Questions for Reflection on This Chapter

1. Please read: 1 Sam. 16:7; Gen. 6:1-5; 1 Pet. 3:1-16; Matt. 5:5; 6:7-8; 11:28-30; Prov. 10:11,19-21,31-32; 14:30; 15:1-4; 18:6-7; 31:25-31; Ps. 36:11,29-31; 48:4; 140:6; Zech. 9:9; Isa. 40:6-8; Gen. 29:17 in light of this lesson.
2. What Biblical heroines did you remember when reading this lesson?

3. What did you understand from this topic?
4. What is female beauty?
5. What is the beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit?
6. Why does Peter call the beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit imperishable?
7. What other spirit of a woman is beautiful in your understanding?
8. Do you know how to admire those who love you? How do you see such people?
9. Have you tried smiling in front of a mirror and making an evil face? Is there a difference between these two expressions?
10. Do you know truly beautiful people? How do you evaluate their beauty? Are they always beautiful in face and body?
11. What should you do if you consider yourself unattractive, but so want to be liked by other people?
12. Has the apostle Paul's advice given in this lesson helped you change something in your life?
13. Do you know beautiful people who are not beautiful?
14. Is God the Father beautiful? How do you imagine Him?
15. Does it depress you that years deprive you of the beauty of youth? How can this be corrected?

Three Blessings

If two friends once decided to build a relationship with the goal of creating a family, and everything is leading to this, then sooner or later they will find themselves at a point where all their plans will come down to a wedding. And what is a wedding? This is when two friends, answering the question: "Do they want to become husband and wife?", answer each other and the witnesses of this celebration: "Yes. Yes." After this statement they are declared husband and wife, and they become one family. And then, as is usually customary, a wedding celebration follows. This is the visible side of relationships that have been built quite long and diligently, considering all the pros and cons.

Although legally two people become husband and wife, it would still be desirable to touch upon the spiritual side, the foundation of their union. Every structure begins with laying a foundation. If it is not there, or it is not of proper quality, then there is a risk of destruction when tested from the outside. The foundation remains in the ground, and it is not visible to the eye after the completion of construction, but it exists and performs its functions for the entire period of operation of the building. And the construction itself must also be reliable and durable.

Each of us wants to have and create something strong, real, indestructible. Whether it be friendship or family, we initially do not plan such unions for a short time. I think if someone wished to be friends with someone for five years or create a family for a certain time with a vague prospect of continuation, then this would be the most foolish union.

A family is in great need of spiritual blessings, which are not visible to the eye, but very strongly affect the strength of the marriage union.

Wishing to have someone's blessing, we thereby place the one who blesses above ourselves and express our deep respect for his actions, hoping for subsequent spiritual support,

remembering the participation of the blessing party in our union.

The first and most important should be God's blessing and approval for the construction and creation of a family. This union should be in accordance with God's requirements and expectations, be free expression of will, correspond to many criteria and common sense that we considered earlier. God takes into account all the factors under which the family was created, and blesses what corresponds to His expression of will and does not contradict common sense. Unfortunately, our world surprises us with its madness and foolishness in inventing all kinds of perversions under the name of family, but God's approach always remains the same, regardless of what times and what the culture of society is.

If there are any violations on our part, or we formally approach the question of creating a family as a good tradition, if we have a deceitful heart to hide our lawlessness, then it is difficult to say whether we will receive what is expected. God is not man, and His blessing cannot be bought or begged for, as something He is obliged to do. One should not joke with Him who very seriously considers each of our decisions. One should hide nothing from Him who knows all our secrets and the movement of thoughts.

It is always necessary to remember that "The blessing of the Lord makes rich, and he adds no sorrow with it" Prov. 10:22.

The second, no less important blessing that a young family needs is the blessing of parents, if they exist and are alive. Despite all our heredity and the upbringing I received, and all the baggage of knowledge that I took from my father's house, we are given a commandment with a promise, a commandment that we honor father and mother. And when we ask for parental blessing on our union, we thereby express special honor and deep respect to father and mother. Parents, although for some time they were for us God's representatives and tutors to Christ, still remain people who do not know and understand everything. But their blessing has a certain power and influence in the spiritual world, and we should reckon with this authority.

The very beginning of our friendship should already have parental approval. Father and mother should know with whom their children are friends, and who wants to become their relative in the future.

Receiving parental blessing, we secure their support for our further life. But parents are different. And even if we are believers and parents are not, or vice versa, or if parents, for example, are divorced, then it is worth honoring these relatives both from the wife's side and from the husband's side. These are the people thanks to whom we exist in this world, and God's commandment does not set us any restrictions.

Our parents may also be those who adopted us or had custody over us. They too should be given special honor.

How should parents bless their children? We are not given direct instructions on this account, but I think that if in their speech there will be words of good wishes and blessings in our address, then this will be what we need. And the Lord will give and multiply this many times over.

And the third blessing that is worth having is the blessing of the church. Being members of one body, we all depend on each other, we influence each other, and we are part of the Heavenly family. The spiritual family also wants to participate in building our family happiness. Our brothers and sisters have a direct influence on us and will be disposed to participate in our life, seeing our honor and respect for them.

When we registered our union with state bodies, we received legal status in the eyes of the state, but we also need spiritual status in the eyes of Heaven, which the Church can give us, which also wants to hear our solemn promise to love each other and be husband and wife.

The Church has authority from Christ to bind on earth what is in its power, and this binding is accepted in Heaven. The pastor on behalf of the church brotherhood asks about our consent to become husband and wife, blesses our union and before all witnesses declares us spouses, asking God's blessing on our

union. And this human decision is noted in Heaven. After this event no one has the right to separate us.

There are other blessings that we can receive. These are the blessings of friends, relatives, neighbors, colleagues and other people who decide to participate in our joy. Representatives of city authorities can also honor us with their visit. All this is also important and complements our happiness, but is not a solid spiritual foundation without which nothing will stand.

All those who bless us receive from us the authority for subsequent participation in our life, to help us, support and bless us further.

In the end, we remain as two, having in the foundation of our relationships abundant blessings, and can continue to build already our happiness, being bound to each other into one whole.

It is also worth noting that all these blessings, although they lie at the foundation of our future family happiness, do not give us a guarantee that this happiness will be ours regardless of us and other factors. Sin, evil associations, carnal nature, temptations from outside can very quickly destroy what had strength and was built for ages. But we can resist all this, having at the foundation of our house abundant blessings that enrich and bring no sorrow with them.

Questions for Reflection on This Chapter

1. Please read: Heb. 7:7; Num. 6:22-27; Isa. 44:3; Deut. 11:26; Prov. 3:33; 10:22; 30:11; 31:10-12; Eph. 1:3; Ps. 5:13; 113:20-23; 133:1-3; Ex. 20:12; Eph. 6:1-4; 1 Kings 2:19; 1 Pet. 2:17; Rev. 19:6-9 in light of this topic.
2. What did you understand from this topic?
3. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
4. What is blessing?
5. What does blessing give to a person or family?
6. Have you ever blessed someone? Has anyone blessed you? If yes, what did it bring?
7. What comes into the life of those who do not want to have blessing?

8. Does God bless what does not correspond to His will and law or contradicts common sense? Deut. 6:16.
9. How much does blessing cost? And what is needed to receive it?
10. Read Job 1:8-11. Do you understand from this passage how God blesses people faithful to Him? Job 42:12-13.
11. Why could Isaac not bless Esau after he blessed Jacob? Gen. 27:31-35.
12. What is the wedding ceremony of newlyweds in church for? Can you do without it?
13. Can all the blessings listed in the lesson be formal? If yes, what is the reason?
14. Do the blessings spoken guarantee happiness for the family? Or is it all conditional?
15. What role and power does blessing have in the spiritual world?

What's Wrong with That?

Our world is an enchanted territory. Cinema has introduced into our culture many sinful values that have become so firmly established in people's worldview that if you think differently from everyone else, you become "a white crow." Unfortunately, that side of love in the family that should be hidden from prying eyes and belong only to husband and wife, the enemy of the soul has brought to public view, reducing it to dog's fun, thereby making it very popular.

In my school years we were instilled with the consciousness that every citizen should have a family and moreover one, and for life. Not so many years have passed, and a legal family becomes a rarity and something old-fashioned among the younger generation.

Cohabitation has so firmly entered the consciousness of society that many simply do not understand how one can create a family without trying one's chosen one in advance. What if they don't suit?

Moreover, the initiative of such relationships comes mainly from men who establish these rules and make them the norm of life.

The Bible calls such relationships fornication and condemns such behavior as sinful. And all this is the beginning of many venereal diseases.

However, this sin also leads people to extramarital pregnancy, which places a certain responsibility on cohabitants. But this too is solved by popularizing abortions and contraceptives. And no one thinks about the consequences, and enchanted people want more to have pleasure.

What has cinema taught us? When two people meet and realize that they are created for each other, they begin to be drawn to each other, and they decide that this is true love. And to beautifully present it to a friend, a first kiss is allowed, which turns on the endocrine system at full power and sets in motion

all kinds of hormones that take possession of a person's feelings and begin to guide many thought processes. And this is not something disgusting, but what brings pleasure and enjoyment even at the level of thoughts and feelings. But young people are short-sighted and do not imagine the consequences of the development of events, and Hollywood solves this problem simply. Give yourself to a friend in the power of his passion and get maximum pleasure from it. And a family is not needed for this. What if this is not the right person? And how else to express your sympathy to a person?

Although I am a believer, and it is difficult for me to describe these abominations, but such is the reality of our world, and this corruption has touched the church as well. During my life in the church brotherhood I have been a frequent witness to how such a spirit leads people away from the truth, destroys families and makes brethren mad in matters of personal life.

Describing correct relationships in sincere love for one another, I understand that for many people this can become a temptation, because they see relationships between opposite sexes at the level of Hollywood ideas, which must necessarily lead us to sin. And this is the reason that the statistics of falls in this matter are quite high and steadily growing.

I think soon will come such a time when they will forbid talking about love for one another in church, so as not to lose what barely lives.

The enemy of the soul has introduced a strategy of imposing and promoting his goals called "Overton Windows." The essence is as follows. Another abomination is taken and put on public display and discussion in various media. It is not taken seriously and is poured with mud, but is not removed from the stage. And since this is long in view, society gets used to the presence of this abomination in its midst. It becomes popular, and then interesting, then fashionable and desirable. As a result, it is introduced into law and given legal status, protecting its freedom. And then over time this abomination is made mandatory and necessary. And the people accept it. And

those who resist such arbitrariness are declared rebels and are persecuted in administrative and criminal order.

The history of the fall of great empires and civilizations comes down to one common denominator—satiation and sexual corruption of society. And this becomes that point of no return, after which there is no more mercy from above, and everything is subject to complete destruction.

When now in our time you try to somehow influence the behavior of people in love and possessed by passion, drawing their attention to Eternal values, then you hear in response words of misunderstanding: "What's wrong with that? We love each other, and everything is serious with us!" And serious is when first God's will is studied, then relationships are built in comprehending each other, and then responsibility is taken and a family is created.

What does a woman experience living with her extramarital friend? She subconsciously has a fear of being abandoned. She has no guarantees that this friend will love and value her always. Their relationship has no legal status, and the state cannot demand anything from them and somehow influence to preserve this union. And God calls this sin and calls to repentance. How will the soul feel in such a dungeon? And if unwanted pregnancy occurs, what to do and what to count on? And with all this baggage unfortunate souls come to God, wanting to remove the burden, but not solve the problem of sin.

And Hollywood continues to colorfully advertise all kinds of abominations, convincing its fans to live exactly this way.

And the people of God are in this environment, hear about what is happening and sigh about all the abominations being committed among them. Ezek. 9:4.

Only God's grace can heal the heart and mind of a sinful person. Only agape love is capable of cleansing the soul from all impurity and abomination. Although sin leaves scars in life, it loses its power where Christ reigns.

The Lord knows what fornicators face, and accepts these people in His arms, granting them forgiveness and strength and calling them to sin no more. But if a person does not consider this sin a sin, then who can help him?

I remember one young woman who suffered from deep depression because her cohabitant after 5 years of life with her left for another. She did not understand her problem, but only repeated: "I want him to come back!" And all attempts to point her to Christ came down to the fact that He should return her friend.

When sin damages the mind and brings with it physical pleasure in the intimate sphere of life, this makes repentance very difficult, and sometimes impossible. And not because God has no power, but because the pleasure center paralyzes the human will, and it is incapable of making decisions about its deliverance, but seeks greater pleasures.

It can also be sad that although the sin of fornication is not accepted by me, it is also not condemned in my neighbors. I resign myself to the fact that society becomes such, and I show a liberal spirit toward this. And this is sad.

If you begin to teach a corrupted heart to love one another, then it will understand this science exactly the opposite and will pervert it to its own destruction.

God, commanding us to love one another, wants to see agape in these relationships. He Himself is revealed in this love, granting us the purity and holiness of His presence.

"But fornication and all uncleanness are not even to be named among us, as is proper for saints." Eph. 5:3.

Questions for Reflection on This Chapter

1. Please read: Heb. 13:4; Eph. 5:1-5; 1 Cor. 5:9-13; 6:9-10,15-20; Lev. 21:13-15; Deut. 23:17-18; 1 Kings 15:11-13; 22:46; Prov. 6:26; 23:27; 29:3; Matt. 21:28-32; Heb. 12:15-16; John 8:2-11 in light of this topic.
2. What did you understand from this topic?
3. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?

4. If the world does not consider fornication something bad, then why should we see it differently?
5. Why is fornication a sin?
6. Can a person be pure in body from the sin of fornication, but in thoughts turn out to be corrupted?
7. What is fornication?
8. Why does God hate fornication, since it brings people pleasure?
9. Why should there be no corrupted brethren in the church?
10. Why in Matt. 21:31 did Jesus say that harlots go before the Pharisees into the Kingdom of Heaven?
11. How did Jesus relate to people with questionable reputations? Luke 15:2.
12. Is there any hope for fornicators to get into the number of the saved?
13. Why is it so important in love and friendship to understand the danger of the spirit of fornication?
14. Will Satan try to seduce brothers and sisters who love each other onto a slippery path?
15. What should I do if I notice in my life impure thoughts and feelings toward a representative of the opposite sex?

How to Find Jesus in Love?

In our relationships of love, my friend and I go through stages of growth and experience various sensual experiences.

Something goes smoothly for us, and something causes many questions, and not only to each other, but also to God, especially if the friend is of the opposite sex.

And here is the most important question that interests us most. Is there Jesus in our love and friendship? If yes, then how does He manifest Himself, and how do we understand that it is He?

The fact that we feel good in our relationships, and we are happy from this, receiving heavenly pleasure, is not an indicator that this is from God, although it is so. God loves everything beautiful and blesses everything pure. But it may happen that I myself will invent God for myself and decide that He is where I think or feel He should be. And in fact our mutual love for each other brings us genuine happiness, which does not go anywhere and does not cause problems of conscience. And since conscience does not condemn, then probably the Lord is favorable to our relationship. And in these guesses we decided that God is with us, and inspired by this idea, we love each other, telling everyone that this is from God.

And if we are asked to give evidence of God's presence, then we will begin to refer to our feelings and emotions, experiences and intuition, confidence that it cannot be otherwise, because it cannot be. But if such arguments convince our friends, they will not be able to give the correct answer to an inquisitive seeker. Someone may say that we are simply in love with each other and therefore look at everything through "rose-colored glasses."

And if we take into account the fact that close relationships between opposite sexes are considered very dangerous, then instead of trusting our testimonies we will be taken note of and they will carefully monitor what is happening in order to react in time and take appropriate measures if we violate something. And all kinds of stereotypes and those people who see love and friendship in a different light will testify against us and

convince us that there can be no friendship between a man and a woman, giving many proofs of the falls of those who decided to test this rule according to the flesh. And they will be right in their own way, because the statistics of falls in this matter are quite high.

But we are interested in the question of whether there is Jesus in our love and friendship? And if yes, then how to determine this?

The first and most important criterion that can give us and others the most correct answer to this question is God's Word. In the Bible it is very clearly written Who is love, whose it is, how God is present in it, how mandatory it is, and that without it I am nothing. Studying God's commandments, I find testimony that to love one another is the direct command of Christ to His disciples, which is the most faithful proof of His presence in our relationships. And this commandment does not divide such relationships by gender.

And if we take into account the fact that Jesus advises to buy love from Him in the last time, then this becomes a very important action.

The second criterion, which also testifies to us about God's presence in our relationships, is the presence of the fruit of the Holy Spirit. We will not be able not to bear this fruit if everything in our relationships corresponds to God's rules and is done from a pure heart. Also the Holy Spirit will not bless what is impure and has wrong motives. It is pleasant to God to see the innocence of our hearts in love for one another, because this shows to the whole world that we are disciples of Christ.

Abstaining from everything that is impure is possible where the Lord is present, and where there is a personal and close relationship with Him.

When you ask about relationships between people in Heaven, trying to find out how pure they will be there, then everyone unanimously answers that there everything will be right and blameless. But when you begin to talk about love and friendship in this world, then opinions are divided.

The Lord has made it clear to us that nothing unclean will enter the Heavenly Kingdom. No carnal thinking will inherit the Eternal dwellings. But at the same time God calls us to love one another and brings this command to the rank of a commandment, something that I cannot not observe.

Who in God's eyes is the one who, having the command about love, enough light on this issue, many opportunities to practice such relationships, chooses non-love or indifference? How does Heaven look at such ignorance?

Giving a new commandment about love for one another, Jesus noticed that He was not heard, and He had to repeat this command twice more. Subsequently, the disciples wrote in their epistles about the importance of such a spirit in relationships with people and with each other, and the apostle John left us the deepest narratives about the importance of love. All this made it simply impossible to bypass this commandment.

But the human heart is deceitful, and to give the right motive to my actions, I can say that I do them out of love, and this cannot be verified immediately, and you have to accept everything on faith.

But the spirit of love will necessarily manifest itself in all other cases, because different fruits cannot grow on one tree.

Knowing everything that the Bible says about love, about God's presence in it, it is worth studying these verses and understanding how much they correspond to our experience, how pure our thoughts are in our love and friendship.

It is also worth being honest with God and with each other. It is not excluded that impure thoughts may appear in our friendship. The enemy of the soul will always spread his charms, just to spoil something. And the more the mind of a person was damaged in this direction, the more furious will be the attacks of Satan. The Lord teaches that gold will have to pass through fire to become even purer, so one should not be afraid of this trial. It is only necessary not to allow the carnal spirit to dominate over my will and feelings.

The Lord will never leave those who ask Him for help from above.

The peculiarities of the last period differ from earlier times in that it is precisely the spirit of faith, love and happiness in knowing the truth and God that will help us endure all the trials of our faith and emerge from them as victors. The message to Laodicea very clearly reveals my problem and offers me a solution that makes me a victor. Faith and love are present in what is offered to me to buy from the Faithful Witness.

God abides in our love for one another. This is what the Bible teaches. And knowing this, I try to see Him in our human experiences and relationships. And I see how He permeates everything with Himself, endowing us with unearthly joy and pure thoughts and feelings that so delight the heart that you are constantly amazed that this is possible. It is possible! And should be.

The commandment about love for one another carries a command and promise that this is possible for believers. But it also contains the blessing of this love, which changes our lives and makes everything so beautiful and great that we did not know, delighting our hearts at all times.

And when I possess this blessing, which really enriches and brings no sorrow with it, when I have a solid Biblical foundation for our relationships, when the Holy Spirit is manifested in our friendship, then it is very easy for me to understand from what Source all this proceeds.

Questions for Reflection on This Chapter

1. Please read: 1 John 4:16; 1 Pet. 1:22; 2:7; 4:8; John 13:34-35; 15:8-13,17-18; 1 John 3:1,11,21-24; 4:7-13,17-21; John 14:15; Prov. 10:12,22; 15:17; Song 2:7; 8:7; Matt. 24:12; 2 Pet. 1:5-7; Rom. 5:5; 12:9-10; 13:10; 1 Cor. 16:14 in light of this topic.
2. What did you understand from this topic?
3. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
4. Is it important to know that God abides in our love for one another?

5. Why did the Lord choose precisely love and commanded us to love one another?
6. To love one another—what is this?
7. If you do not yet have a friend for love, do you have plans for this?
8. To love one another—is this possible in our time?
9. What role does love play in the last time?
10. Is it necessary to invite God into your relationships of love for one another, or does He come automatically?
11. What should we do if we read in the Bible that God abides in love, but do not feel this in reality?
12. How to understand whether the Lord is in our relationships?
13. How to determine whether we bear the fruit of the Spirit in our love for one another? Gal. 5:22-23.
14. What should we do if we see God in our relationships, but others do not believe us and consider us sinners?
15. Do you think your words of love spoken to your friend bring joy and blessing?

Matchmaking

Marriage is the most important and most responsible event in the life of every person. Nothing brings people so much happiness and blessings in their lives as a successful union of two hearts that wisely, in a prayerful spirit, approached the solution of this question.

When two friends who love each other decide to create a legal family union, taking into account all the pros and cons, guided by common sense and God's will, then this is the most beautiful decision, promising abundant blessings regarding subsequent events.

Nothing destroys a person's life as much as an unsuccessful marriage based on hasty decisions and personal ambitions. There is no more certain way to quickly lead a believer away from God and forever plunge him into darkness than to allow him to create a family with an unbelieving spouse or with someone who does not suit him in many parameters. Unhappy families are the favorite field of activity of dark forces, where the spirits of wickedness in the heavenly places can oppress both spouses all subsequent life. And even a desired divorce will not solve many complex problems associated with the incompatibility of two relatives.

When someone wants to build something solid on sand or builds on a solid foundation from non-solid material, then one should expect serious problems and destruction under impressive trials.

If I have come to a decision to create a family, then I should not hurry with the quick realization of this desire. When I am friends with various people, trying to fulfill God's commandment about love for one another, I do not always notify my parents and the parents of my friend about this. There is no need for this, but my parents may know with whom I am friends if I begin to involve them in this. But when I plan to create my family, my father and mother, if they exist, should be informed in this matter. I should reckon with the opinion and

experience of those who gave me life and love me. Not all parents can be wise counselors, not all are able to recognize the future problems of my family life, but I should honor those who raised me and cared for me. And even if I have already become an adult and independent person, the opinion of my parents is worth considering.

I should also meet the parents of my future spouse and introduce myself to them as a person who has serious plans for their daughter and wants to know their opinion on this matter.

Describing these principles of relationships in honoring our parents, I understand that parents are different and sometimes unpredictable. If I believe in God, and they do not, then not all their advice may suit me, but here wisdom is needed on how to behave, and the Lord will give it if I pray about this. The consent and approval of our parents for our friendship gives us freedom to continue our relationship and removes many obstacles in the development of our friendship.

One should not hurry with announcing the date of the proposed wedding. First it is worth asking permission for our friendship, in which we plan to get to know each other closer with the goal of creating a family. Parents can see in this the seriousness of our plans, and also have time and opportunity to get to know their future relatives better, participate in our construction of happiness and give us wise advice and warnings.

While we were just friends, there was no special need to involve anyone else in these relationships. But when we decided to be friends with the goal of creating a family, then our parents should be the first to know about this and, if possible, personally meet my friend.

It may also be that parents are divorced and, having their own families, do not maintain close relationships with their children. But they too need to be notified about one's plans for life, because they are not strangers.

God's commandment about honoring father and mother does not give us restrictions on which parents we should honor and how to do this, but also does not free us from responsibility in

this matter while parents are alive. It is better to err on the side of love for one's father and mother than to show neglect toward them.

And so, we have informed everyone, and everyone is aware of our relationship. There comes such a time when we decide to introduce our parents to our chosen one. And not just, but so that our parents are witnesses of my proposal of hand and heart to my beloved and hear our words and answers on this matter. Such an event is called matchmaking. It is not accepted everywhere, but is not something bad when it is done in a spirit of honor and deep respect for our parents. Usually friends and other relatives are invited to such events, after which, having heard the consent of the future bride, other events can be planned.

There are also dangerous types of matchmaking, when my friends begin to engage in this, who see a beautiful couple in us and persistently offer us to each other. Perhaps their advice will prove wise and push us to some important actions, but one should not make hasty decisions for their sake. Let their advice be of a recommendatory nature. And I myself should not be a matchmaker and decide someone's fates, convincing a person to act one way or another.

I have experienced many experiences when my friends created their families or planned to do so. And they asked me how I see their union and what I would advise them to do. I took it as a rule not to decide such fateful questions for others, but gladly shared how I see this situation, allowing friends to make final decisions themselves. And even if I advise something to someone, I do not expect that my advice will be strictly followed.

Sometimes I meet indecisive people who are afraid to take the first step, and I see that their friendship will bring them mutual blessing. Then you can help such people pay attention to each other and participate in their future happiness, without taking responsibility for making the final decision. And then you can rejoice that something good worked out for them.

Having great experience in observation and analysis, possessing knowledge about what a family should be and what it should not be under any circumstances, one can foresee very many dangers and warn about them, and also point out hidden blessings that many do not see with a superficial glance.

But I do not create happy families, but teach friends to be happy in what they choose, and to have a solid connection with the true Source of happiness—our dear Savior.

Matchmaking is not a final decision. Until marriage takes place, much can be weighed and changed. In this event the role of the man is to make the proposal, and the role of the woman is to wait for this proposal and give her answer. But in no way vice versa.

The presence or awareness of our close relatives is desirable. After all, they also have influence on us.

Being members of God's church, we need to inform all brethren about our decision to be friends with the goal of creating a family, so that no one has questions about why we are together so often.

But the most important moment of all these events is our dedication to God and request for His blessing and protection. And our Heavenly Father awaits our prayers on this matter, to answer and bless.

Questions for Reflection on This Chapter

1. Please read: Eph. 6:1-4; Mal. 4:4-6; Gen. 2:24; Ex. 20:12; 21:15,17; Deut. 5:16; Matt. 15:3-9; Mark 10:17-19; Eph. 5:15-18,28-33; Lev. 20:8-9; Prov. 15:20; 20:20 in light of this topic.
2. What did you understand from this topic?
3. What Biblical heroes or stories came to your mind?
4. Is it so important to do what this lesson is written about?
5. What benefit does honoring parents bring to a person?
6. Are those people who adopted and raised you parents? Should they also be honored?

7. How do you understand the word "honor"? What does this mean, and what should this look like?
8. Is it important to make the decision yourself in choosing a life partner, or should only parents do this?
9. What should you do if parents are against your union, and you love each other?
10. Do you think it is necessary to consult with the Heavenly Father about how much this or that person suits me?
11. Does Jesus consult with His Father when choosing a bride for Himself?
12. Why is the choice of a life partner the most important decision in which one cannot make a mistake?
13. What awaits those who do not consider the opinion of their parents?
14. Does this lesson have any spiritual significance for the last time?
15. Do our spiritual Heavenly Parents expect any decisions from us?

To Love Before...

When people in love decided to be friends in order to subsequently create their family, notified their parents about this, then the most interesting time began for them, during which they can know each other and discuss many issues related to their common future.

I like to call this time a time of fasting and prayer.

Studying throughout my life the patterns of creating family unions, I came to the correct conclusion that the more seriously young people approach this question, the more seriously God will bless them. Those who want to know God's will for their future life will know it. The Lord readily communicates with people who consult with Him on any question, and especially on such important ones as creating a family.

It may also be that young people initially do not suit each other, and if in this mismatch they quickly created a family because they were guided by feelings and desires, then their union would be very unhappy and short-lived. But when they began in fasting and prayer to beg for God's blessings for themselves and made the decision to be friends no matter what, then in their consciousness the Lord begins to produce changes and puts in them a new heart capable of understanding the needs of another person and serving him.

The incompatibility of two people can be for only one reason: if both of them or one of them decides to cherish in themselves an egoistic spirit that does not submit to God, and indeed cannot.

Premarital acquaintance gives a very good opportunity to identify this egoistic spirit and understand who you are yourself, and who your friend is. The Lord will certainly show this to those who persistently ask Him about it. And if the Lord reveals something to us, then not with the goal of surprising us, but with the offer to change us. How I respond to these reproofs, I must decide myself.

People make a big mistake who in their friendship move from reasonable communication to sensual pleasures. Such experience puts "rose-colored glasses" on those in love, and instead of deep knowledge of God's will they move into the enchanted land of carnal lusts, which will not allow them to look soberly at life.

Family life is not a sensual celebration lasting a lifetime, but a joint path filled with everyday duties and tasks, among which sometimes there are celebrations.

In premarital knowledge of each other, many paths and opportunities are opened to us, which we can choose together, developing our horizons and character. I think it is best to start with the decision to love one another according to the commandment. Although it may seem to someone that this is added by itself and this is even in our relationships, but in reality everything is much more serious than it seems at first. Love for one another is a conscious decision and invitation of God into our relationships, which have a beginning, to never end. And even if we understand in this love that we do not suit each other as a family and decide not to create anything together, then our love and friendship will not go anywhere, and we will still love each other and rejoice that we exist.

Our decision to love one another gives God the authority to send us revelations about this love and teach us this Eternal art. We discover a new world, new opportunities and prospects.

In love for one another there is a beginning, which we can determine by our decision to embark on this path, but this undertaking, according to God's design, will never stop and never exhaust itself, but will eternally fill and delight the hearts of its participants.

We, although limited by earthly laws beings, but at the same time have in ourselves infinite potential, which is discovered and developed as it is demanded.

Love for one another opens for me the most interesting and educational book in the world—the heart of my friend. This

knowledge will never end and will always delight my loving heart.

Knowledge of each other occurs not only in direct communication, but also in joint affairs, in common service, in contact with other people, in difficulties and trials that we experience throughout our friendship.

If there is an opportunity to undergo premarital counseling with spiritual people, then this must definitely be used. The opinion and wisdom of observation of a third party who has life experience will help us see ourselves and our union from the outside, identify many problems and understand useful things that we never thought about.

I think it will not be superfluous to ask different people what we need to do in order for us to be happy in our family, and what should be avoided.

Sometimes the advice of those whose families have been destroyed can be more important and useful than others. When I know what a family should not be, then I can foresee many dangers. But it is better not to get carried away with this negativity, but to study those advantages that love and friendship bring, and follow this course.

God more than anyone wants our future family happiness, and He will certainly teach this to those who ask Him about it. I should understand that my prayers on this issue will be answered. And my fasts will be accepted. Of course, it is best if fasting and prayer are from both sides, but if this is not always possible to make a common event, then my initiative should be constant. In petition to God I open my heart and can know His will.

Of course, we both should be believers from one denomination, not married to other people. Otherwise all fasts and prayers will have no meaning.

In my prayers to God I may not hear a direct answer from Heaven, but the Lord will create such circumstances in which we will see the strengths and weaknesses of each other.

To love one another and become friends before we become a family is the most faithful path and the best decision. Not everything always works out as we plan. If our mismatch to each other as future husband and wife has been revealed to us, then we can continue nothing, but love and friendship remain between us, and we can always use this, even if we have families created with other people.

And if we still decide to create our family, then our love and friendship will pass into a family union and will develop further in closer relationships.

It is so wonderful when your wife is also your friend, whom you love at all times. You can discover so much interesting in her and each time delight her heart with your joy about her. And this is possible, but such is not acquired from nothing. Family happiness must be built by joint efforts in one spirit, on one God.

When we bought a ready building and moved into it, we do not know what it is built from and how quality and solid it is. But when we build our house ourselves, having a solid Foundation and observing all laws and norms, then our dwelling will be safe, and it will be erected by us taking into account all our tastes and interests.

God gives us the authority to build for ourselves what we want, and He Himself applies His hand to our structure, being present in our love for one another.

Questions for Reflection on This Chapter

1. Please read: 1 Cor. 16:14; Gen. 2:24; Song 1:14-16; 2:1-16; 5:8-16; 7:7,11-12; 8:7; John 13:35; 14:21; 17:26; 1 John 4:7-8; Eph. 5:1-3; 1 Pet. 1:22; Gal. 5:6; 1 Cor. 13:4-8, Rom. 12:9-10 in light of this topic.
2. What did you understand from this topic?
3. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
4. Is it mandatory to become friends before the wedding?
5. Are such knowledge needed by those who already have grandchildren? Prov. 22:6.

6. What benefit does love and friendship bring to people before entering into marriage union?
7. Do you think friends who love each other will have a prospect for continuing these relationships in marriage?
8. Why is love and friendship needed in the family?
9. Can a person love his friend from a pure heart without knowing the laws of love and friendship?
10. Does the Lord want to see His love in His children when they ask for blessing on their family?
11. What family happiness can be built without knowing the foundations and laws of this happiness?
12. What should I do if I already have a family but do not have love and friendship in it?
13. Is love needed in the family? If yes, for what?
14. What advantage is given to those who have love and friendship before entering into marriage? Is this so important?
15. What awaits those who create a family for the sake of a family, believing that feelings and love will come by themselves?

Friends Are Known in Trouble

My life is closely intertwined with construction, and I like to take examples from there that clearly show what invisible things from the spiritual world look like. In construction there are certain laws and rules that cannot be violated. Not everything that may seem solid to me is such. And not everything that looks weak is actually weak. Having worked for many years with plans and statistical calculations, I have subconsciously learned to feel construction and notice many things that you will not pay attention to. But when I encounter an unfamiliar technology, then I become very interested in understanding its structure and patterns. For example, when laying load-bearing structures we are accustomed to working with iron and concrete, and this has already become a classic approach, but when I learn that there are people who instead of iron invented fiberglass, I strain greatly, not knowing how to perceive this. I do not undertake to judge the inventors of these technologies, but time and trials will show whether it is worth dealing with this material.

I know how to build large houses, and the bigger the object, the more interesting it is. But when the time came and I began to erect a small dacha for myself in the garden, I encountered the fact that many of my knowledge in big construction in no way suits garden houses. And when, to the surprise of all neighbors, I began to construct something similar to a bomb shelter, then, besides experienced ridicule, I also managed to make many mistakes that taught me something. A house must be protected on all sides from water, wind and cold. But most importantly—it must be under God's protection.

When the garden construction was finished, everything looked like the neighbors', but in my little house the foundation holds the roof, which may be useful in the near future.

In our region lately there are frequent hurricanes and hail. Twice there were even small earthquakes. Trees fall, tiles fly off roofs, power lines are torn, and this is only the beginning of interesting events. And each time I am curious to know how

things are in our gardening community. Whose greenhouse is now lying on neighboring plots? The Lord keeps what is dedicated to Him and built according to all rules and laws. And when you see everything whole and unharmed, then you thank God for wonderful protection.

From childhood I knew such a proverb: "Friends are known in trouble." And it is not without meaning in Christian love and friendship. Any normal construction occurs under favorable conditions, in which it is difficult to determine how this will hold during a hurricane. But wise engineers make calculations before proceeding to erect a building. So the Lord gave us His plans and calculations, in which He sequentially and quite clearly described what our relationships should be, and what they should not be. However, no matter how we build our friendship, there will always come that day that will test our strength and show us our strengths and weaknesses.

One should not bring closer the time of tribulation and arrange artificial disasters to test yourself and your friend. This world is full of all kinds of unexpected events, and they will come anyway without our invitation. Everything will be tested.

I do not want to boast of my strength or be confident in the strength of my dear friends. I do not know who I really am, and what my friend is made of. But I know one very important rule for all types of construction: if I perform all work according to plan, taking into account all dimensions, prescriptions and norms, then I should not worry about the strength of the building. I will not have to answer for its strength during natural disasters.

The same rule operates in our friendship. If we build relationships according to all God's prescriptions, taking into account all commandments, requirements and advice of the Lord, asking for wisdom and blessing on our love and friendship, then we should not worry about whether our love will withstand coming events. We will not have to worry about how a friend will manifest himself in trouble that may suddenly come.

While there are spirits of wickedness in the heavenly places in this world, we should not relax or show negligence in building strong relationships with friends. We are at war, and the enemy can arrange an ambush where you least expect it. But the Lord has foreseen all the possibilities of the enemy of the soul and described all laws capable of resisting attacks from outside.

And each time when another hurricane of human passions comes, and someone's roof is blown off, and someone's brain is blown beyond the reasonable, you carefully watch yourself and pray for your friend more than usual, wanting to understand how this trial will end. And as a rule, you see that relationships were strong, and nothing damaged them. And after such problems our friendship becomes even stronger, even deeper and more trusting.

Of course, there can be disappointments, but they too teach us what was wrong.

I remember a case when during our trading in Yugoslavia in the nineties our friends were robbed by our own "friends," leaving them without things, money and documents. When we learned about this, being at this time in Hungary, our surprise knew no bounds, and we did everything possible to help restore those losses that the victims of trust experienced. We forgot about our profit and began to help people who found themselves in trouble. This brought us closer even more firmly, and this friendship has been preserved until now, having passed through other trials as well.

I know cases when friends became enemies, and this happens where relationships are built not according to the spirit, but according to the flesh.

When I did not yet know God, I built friendship according to concepts. And I saw how my buddies easily left, deceived or betrayed me in difficult situations. My ideas about friendship were strongly shaken. But I met Jesus and He gave a new understanding of such relationships.

Studying this science, I decided for myself to be a faithful friend no matter what. I ask the Lord to bless and keep me in the

choice "to always remain a friend," and something unusual happens in my head. I become a friend forever. And then it is so easy to build relationships with friends and navigate complex trials. I prefer to err on the side of love and friendship, and this is always the most correct decision, although sometimes not everyone agrees with me. But I make this choice for myself and live as I decided. This is not noticeable in my appearance, but is kept in my heart, and in this state I want to get into Eternity. Jesus taught me this. And I would rather err on the side of mercy and good and suffer losses, but I can be honest in my friendship.

The greatest fear in me is caused by the thought that I will once not stand in my friendship and love and will disappoint those who love me. Better to die than to sin so. And with these fears I come to Jesus, and He calms me, showing His wounds. I understand that I did not invent something new, but only follow Him who is always faithful to His friendship.

And I also understand that my attitudes about friendship should be correct, because God's principles lie at their foundation. God does not call me to be a faithful friend to the servants of the devil. But when the Lord gives me His son or daughter, wanting to see our friendship, then God's laws come into action and build between us what will definitely withstand any trouble.

Questions for Reflection on This Chapter

1. Please read: 1 Pet. 4:8-10; Prov. 17:17; 22:3; 27:12; Ps. 45:2-3; 126:1; 1 Cor. 3:9-17; 4:1-2; Prov. 14:1; 17:3; 18:24; 20:27; 21:10; 27:10,17; Matt. 7:26-27; John 13:34-35; Rom. 5:8; Song 7:11 in light of this topic.
2. What did you understand from this topic?
3. What examples from the Bible came to your mind?
4. Has your friendship with people ever been tested?
5. Do you think if you build correct relationships with correct people, being a correct person, will everything be correct with you?
6. Are friends always known in trouble?
7. Does the prospect of being a bad friend please you? How can this be prevented?

8. Will there be a quarrel with a friend if he does not exist? Or maybe it is not worth making friends so as not to lose them?
9. What should I do if my friend turned out to be a faithful friend, and I am not? Or vice versa?
10. Will the Lord test the love and friendship of His children?
Jer. 17:10.
11. Gold tested by fire—is this something good that we should have? Rev. 3:18.
12. Does the Lord want to see His disciples faithful in love and friendship?
13. What is needed to pass the trials of friendship and maintain faithfulness in this?
14. Can I myself decide what to be in my trouble or in the trouble of my friend? Or does it not depend on me?
15. What should I do if our relationship with a friend is wonderful, but trouble does not come? Should we create it ourselves?

Peculiarities of Premarital Friendship

We made a joint decision to be friends with the goal of creating a family. Our relationship moved into an interesting phase of knowing each other. Our hearts tuned to a certain period of time during which we decided to remain friends in mutual knowledge. Having no experience of such relationships, we began to acquire it.

Our agreement does not obligate us to get married. We do not know each other well enough to entrust our lives into other hands. And to understand what these hands will be like, we need time, we need revelations from the Lord, joint communication and common affairs. But our hearts are set on family, and although this goal is conditional, it sets a certain spirit and meaning to our relationship.

For example, if we decide to be just friends and love each other, this does not limit us in the opportunity along with this union to create new relationships. But if I wanted to be friends with the goal of entering into marriage and for this chose two or three girls, so that later I could decide which of them suits me better, then this is unacceptable and will look quite insulting.

I can choose my future wife from a dozen candidates for this place. I can have friendly relations with all, but when my choice fell on a specific person, and we decided to be friends with the goal of creating a family, then it is expected that such friendship will be only between us. Although this agreement gives us the opportunity to become closer in mutual knowledge, it does not prohibit communication with other people, and I behave as one who conditionally already belongs to another person and maintains loyalty to this belonging, not violating these boundaries and not allowing others to cross them either.

Many years ago a young man came to our church who had cheerful communication with the youth, and after the service he asked me to take several photos on his camera. He tenderly embraced one of our sisters and smiled sweetly at the camera. I was surprised by such closeness of an unfamiliar brother, and

later I asked his father about how serious such relationships are. To this I received the answer that this person, like a sailor, has a girlfriend in every church, and the parents no longer take such antics seriously. What is interesting is that all these girlfriends think that they are the only ones in such a role. There should not be such a thing in our friendship. Everything should be honest and open.

The Bible does not forbid me to have many friends, love them and be friendly, but to be friends for a future family one should only with one person.

If I see that the one I chose for joint life does not suit me, then before entering into marriage one can terminate premarital relations and move to the status of an ordinary friend, notifying all relatives, friends and brethren about this. We are free to manage our lives within the framework of our understanding. Such a step can bring the pain of breaking relationships, but friendship and love soften this pain and help to live on calmly. It is better immediately, before marriage, to decide what will be impossible to change later. For this such friendship is chosen, to find out how compatible we are.

Not all believers suit each other as members of one family. And to determine this, close joint pastime is needed. One should not bind oneself with strong bonds with someone with whom you decided to be friends to know them better. After all, this friendship is conditional and does not carry strict obligations.

Also one should not plan such relationships for several long years, thinking that someday we will mature for a final decision. Of course, if your candidate is only 14, and you are 16, then you need to wait until you reach legal age, and gain wisdom during this time so as not to make a mistake.

If our friendship revealed our incompatibility or some vices that are unacceptable to bring into the family, then it is best to terminate the relationship before the wedding is announced. It is more reasonable to suffer a little now than to suffer all the rest of your life.

But not every incompatibility is fatal. Perhaps my carnal heart cannot live in the spiritual atmosphere of love and sends me alarming signals to break off relations. One should soberly evaluate oneself and one's friend.

Acceptance solves many questions better than we imagine. I see that my girlfriend thinks differently than I do, sees everything differently, has her own opinion and differs very much from me. In a word, the complete opposite. But this is how the Lord created us, so that in this diversity we could delight and complement each other.

I know some single people who consider the opposite sex so unacceptable for themselves that they do not even want to talk about any marital relations. But this is their right. With such a spirit it is better not to spoil someone's life. Acceptance is the agreement of my will with the peculiarities of my neighbor and condescension to their differences.

The spirit of love and friendship helps me see and accept all the advantages and disadvantages of the one who plans to become my other half, and opens me to her. And in this mutual knowledge of each other we make vital decisions that give us the right direction and help us understand what we need.

If we decided to part before we said "yes" to each other, then we are free to build our life as we want and with whom we wish. But one should not become enemies and tell outsiders the secrets of another person into which we were initiated during our close communication.

To remain friends is the law of Heavenly life, which will help us not to lose earthly happiness and have joy seeing the happiness of a friend who decided to arrange their life without you.

It is hard to be rejected, even if everything was leading to this. But love quickly puts everything in its place and convinces me of a better prospect.

If someone took away my girlfriend, making her understand that he is better, then this is their right. Let it be so. And it is good that this happened outside of marriage. And I will pray for

their happiness and rejoice that everything is working out well for them.

Although breakups of relationships can happen, most often this is an exception rather than a rule. We are not blind people and understand to whom we offer friendship and give consent to relationships. If I chose the one with whom I decided to live the rest of my life, then I am no longer interested in other women. I am tuned to a specific person and study them comprehensively.

Our hearts are arranged to cling to someone and in this union become one whole for solving joint tasks. We are created for each other, and when I find my half and cling to her, we become one person, and outside this union we are single man and woman. All the good that we discover in each other before the wedding will help us after to preserve our friendship and develop it within the family, passing on our love and friendliness to children.

God's blessing always abides where His love reigns. Whether it be friendship or family, or just communication, everywhere love produces good influence and gives joy to the heart. It is worth having it in relationships before marriage, and all the more in it.

Questions for Reflection on This Chapter

1. Please read: Gen. 2:24; Luke 20:34; Prov. 17:17; 18:24; Song 5:16; John 13:34-35; 1 Pet. 1:22; 1 Cor. 7:28,32-34; Rom. 8:28,38-39; Matt. 24:37-38 in light of this topic.
2. What did you understand from this topic?
3. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
4. Do you think it will be right to know your friend better before the wedding or is it not worth spending time on this, but better to get married right away, and there as it turns out?
5. What does their knowledge of each other before the wedding give to people who want to enter into marriage? What does this change?
6. If two people decided to create a family, does this mean that they suit each other?

7. Is it worth discussing with a candidate for family all the peculiarities of premarital relations? Or should they themselves know everything and guess about my plans?
8. What should you do if your chosen one cannot live without you? Should you believe them or should this be checked?
9. Will it be honest to have premarital friendship with several candidates for family?
10. What should you do if the heart loves two or several girlfriends, and they all suit for family? With which of them should you begin relations? Or is it better not to marry at all?
11. What should you do if you want to have a family, but there is no such person who could occupy this place?
12. Is God interested in our family happiness? Will He participate in what we are building?
13. Will God show the dangers of an unsuccessful marriage union if we ask Him about this before the wedding? If yes, in what way?
14. How to understand God's will regarding the creation of our family? How should the Lord declare it to us?
15. Does the freedom in choosing a life partner that we have in the Lord please you? Why does the Lord allow us to make independent decisions in this important matter?

What Will We Live On and Where?

Having decided to be friends with the purpose of entering marriage, we enter into very interesting relationships that promise us many changes. We are inspired by the romantic prospects of the approaching culmination, and we, experiencing this anticipation, build our future happiness already now.

I imagine how joyful it will be for us together, and I will be able to hug her at all times, and she thinks about how I will carry her in my arms and delight her with my constant care. Our expectations coincide in something, and in some moments we differ in opinions. But we like this too, and we look at life cheerfully, giving everything to God in prayer.

But surrounding circumstances have brought us to a strange situation to discuss the question of what we will live on and where we will live. I am very satisfied with my parents' kitchen, and her mother cooks quite well too. I think that if they get an extra mouth, they will not even notice it. After all, we are relatives, and you cannot get away from us.

And why think about this?! We will somehow get through this question too and definitely think of something. After all, there are so many people around us, and they are all fed and somehow live, and we will live. And for us to be well, we should not think about our everyday life, let our parents take care of this, because they love us and will not allow us to be deprived of anything. And if anything, then grandmother's pension will come to help.

To my surprise, the parents of my future queen also became very interested in how I could support their daughter, and, inviting us for a conversation, they began to ask what specialty I have, what work experience, how much I already earn, and what prospects I have. A flurry of unexpected questions fell upon me, from which I at first joked, but then understood that everything was quite serious and now the question of our further friendship was being decided.

I felt uncomfortable from the realization that, besides myself and my body, I could not offer anything substantial for their daughter. And she listened with great interest to my answers and smiled sadly.

I became ashamed of myself, and I confessed that I know nothing except working with a smartphone, but I can quickly google any information and find the correct answer in the search results. And I can also beautifully sing spiritual songs, which gathers thousands of likes. And my blogger jokes bring wild delight to all my subscribers, of whom I already have several thousand.

But the bride's parents were interested in what I would support their daughter on, and where we plan to live after the wedding. From these questions I understood that they want to get rid of us, and counting on full parental care would not work. I did not even imagine that everything could be so complicated. It seemed to me that our mutual love would be enough for us to be well, and the wife's parents would be delighted with such a son-in-law who so tenderly loves their child, and would take care of us for the sake of their daughter.

My fiancée also began to ask questions about the material side of life, which simply disconcerted me. I counted on the fact that her salary could cover all our needs, and I would continue my creativity and feel her support in this matter.

In conversation with the parents I understood the deplorable state of my prosperity and did not know what to answer, but honestly admitted it. And with this I surprised no one. They saw this from the first day of our acquaintance, but waited for a convenient occasion to help me understand this. I realized that they love their daughter and love me too, and want to support us.

I was least interested in the material side of our future, because happiness is not in money. But it turned out that this too needs to be thought about. I began to recall my experiences and interests and decided that some useful specialty would not hurt.

The question of housing also surprised me. My parents have my room, and she has her own in her house. Why look for something when everything is there? I remember from the history of our culture that a son brought his wife into the house and lived like that together with his parents. But now, apparently, times are different. Although I understand that separately from everyone, independently, it is more interesting to live, but at current housing prices it is unrealistic to buy something. This is a burden for life! And here, at parents', everything is there. And we will also bear them grandchildren, and let them rejoice. And it will be convenient for us to leave children under supervision. How complicated everything is if you start to sort it out! How do others solve this? I do not understand.

Left alone with my friend, I assured her of my love. But against the background of the past conversation, my words looked ridiculous, and I understood that you cannot spread them on bread. But she turned out to be very enterprising and began to describe my abilities, developing which I could earn quite well. I revived, and we began together to make a new business plan, in which my fiancée also decided to participate. We decided that we need to live separately from everyone and in complete self-sufficiency. Let this be little, but this will be our world, in which we ourselves will be masters.

We prayed and began to collect the necessary information, ask friends and brethren about what was unclear to us. We even decided to trade sunflower seeds on the street to get into the principles of trade.

The prayer of faith in these matters was very appropriate, and we saw how the Heavenly Father opens our eyes and gives wisdom in making the right decisions. And our parents, seeing our enterprise, offered to help us in our searches and even support us with money if there is an acute need. And we already wanted to solve everything ourselves and not burden anyone with our cares.

The Lord made us understand that at first we do not necessarily have to buy our own housing. It can be rented while we determine where to live and what to do.

We learned to attend all kinds of trainings, seminars, and courses to understand how we can better use our potential and realize our dreams.

It turned out that the most important event was a course on healthy eating, the ability to cook properly and at the same time lead a healthy lifestyle. We joyfully plunged into this science too, sharing with each other our revelations and achievements in this sphere. Our friendship became much tastier and healthier.

Having learned to relate correctly to money and to our way of life, we were no longer afraid to enter adult life, but joyfully awaited that day when we would say "Yes" to each other and continue to build that in which a solid Foundation was laid.

We did not lose each other in our friendship, having met unforeseen difficulties, but experienced how the Lord turned everything for good to us and our parents. I began to notice that the friend's parents began to respect me very much, and I was very grateful to them, because they with such love revealed our serious omissions and supported us in their elimination.

The question of where and what we will live on is very relevant and quite acutely posed in many families. And it is desirable to solve it before the wedding, and solve it practically. Not everything that suits me will suit us, and this needs to be foreseen and discussed. In some cases, family life in the parental home will be a necessity and a wise decision. Everything is solved very simply if you discuss it seriously and together.

Questions for Reflection on This Chapter

1. Please read Amos 3:3; 1 Tim. 5:8; Prov. 10:1; 15:20,22; 31:10-11; Eccl. 2:24; 5:17; 7:29; 8:1,15; 10:17; 1 Cor. 4:2; 8:3; Luke 12:29-32 in light of this topic.
2. What did you understand from this topic?

3. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
4. Is it worth discussing future everyday questions before the wedding?
5. Can it be that your friend's answers about what and where you will live will disappoint you in him? Maybe then it is better not to ask about this?
6. Can honest communication with a friend solve many questions before they arise?
7. Is it worth discussing difficult topics with the one who brings you happiness and joy?
8. Do you think the main question of this lesson will someday become urgent and relevant in the life of a young family?
9. What will be added to me if I wish to seek the Kingdom of God and will not think about my family? Matt. 6:31-34. How to correctly understand these words of Jesus?
10. If I already have housing and money for life, is it worth discussing these questions?
11. What to do if you want to create a family, and there is even someone with whom, but there is nowhere to live?
12. Is it worth counting on the help of parents when creating a family, because they are accustomed to taking care of us?
13. What to do if, when discussing such questions, we understood that we do not suit each other and we need to part?
14. Is it worth raising such questions if they can destroy our relationship?
15. Will the School of Agape Love be to blame if, after studying these lessons, you decide to part with your friend, understanding that this is not the right person?

Uncomfortable and Foolish Questions

Planning to create a family, we have close communication in which we know the depths of our hearts. In our friendship and love for one another, we sometimes see only what we have in our relationships, but this does not give us a complete understanding of how a friend will manifest himself, and what thoughts we have in ourselves.

We are interested in many things that have nothing to do with our relationship but satisfy our curiosity. Very often our questions to each other can be foolish and disconcerting, for which it becomes shameful. But a word once spoken cannot be taken back. And such mistakes can threaten our relationship because they present us in an unfavorable light. How will love act in these situations? It is difficult to say. Although I choose love and friendship, I no longer want to link my life with a foolish and superficial person.

And if foolish questions lead us to a quarrel, then the enemy of the soul immediately tries to present each of us to each other in the most disgusting light, reminding us of those moments from our relationship that before the quarrel we did not want to notice.

Foolish questions can be humiliating in nature, can violate a person's freedom, can bring him into sorrow or surprise a friend with their foolishness. But unfortunately, we are sometimes like this.

The world teaches us many bad things. Jokes and anecdotes, foolish films and theatrical productions have a strong influence on us. Looking at all this, we are transformed into our heroes and make their way of thinking and behavior our own. And such imitation will necessarily manifest itself in friendship.

Not every foolishness is dangerous. One should not immediately terminate relations with the one you love, but you should seriously discuss such moments to understand how deeply they sit in the heart.

I do not recommend asking a friend questions about what sins and vices he committed in the past, especially if these sins are forgiven. The Lord does not want us to retrieve from the ocean depths what He has buried there forever. There are also questions that can reveal our foolishness, self-interest, vanity, whim, or lust.

If you have already had someone before your friend with whom you had extramarital relations, then you should honestly tell about this before entering marriage, because if such things are revealed in marriage, they can bring serious problems into it. However, you should also take into account the time in which such an experience occurred. Perhaps the Lord has already forgiven and cleansed everything, so you should not make another tragedy out of this. But whatever the answer, it should always remain between us, even if we decide to part. One cannot put other people's secrets on public display.

There are questions of an everyday nature that will necessarily surface in the family, and it is desirable to ask them before marriage. For example, if your friend has real estate, then to whom will it go if he suddenly dies, to whom will all the property of your other half go; to whom will I give my treasures accumulated over a lifetime, and how many of them do I have.

Although for some this is not so important, there are such friends who are more interested in this than in you. Such questions should not be asked in the first days of friendship, but they need to be discussed before creating a family. If there are children from the first marriage, then it is important to understand what status they will have in our family. It is also worth figuring out how money will be spent and what projects it will be directed to.

The money question and love of money are those spheres of family relations in which you can take second place, even if you are the main breadwinner. Not everything that is brought into our family can be a blessing for us. A mercenary spirit will separate us from good friends, and this must be taken into account.

Perhaps I think that a wife should work, but she does not think so. What to do with our elderly parents or how to relate to relatives with whom we are connected by strong ties?

Our diverse relatives exert a strong influence on our thinking and can manipulate a person's will. Not all relatives of your friend may accept you, so you should understand what influence they have, how they can destroy your relationship, and how your friend behaves under this influence. What cuisine will be in our house? Who will cook, and who will clean? We have different ideas about food, and if someone eats meat and drinks coffee, considering it useful, then for someone this can be like death.

What chronic diseases or ailments does your friend have? What bothers him in health matters, and how interested is he in this topic?

What films and programs does he like to watch, what newspapers and books does he read? What political views does he have, how international is he, and what nationalities cause him irritation?

All these and other things can quietly lie in the recesses of our hearts and not manifest themselves in any way during friendship. Our feelings and emotions can be our bread of life and delight us in our communication, and when you feel good, you do not want to lose it and therefore consciously reject uncomfortable questions, thinking that it will somehow settle and be solved by itself, and love will cover everything. But unfortunately, underwater rocks not identified in time will necessarily make themselves known at the most inappropriate time.

When I know what my friend represents, what he lives by, what interests him, then I understand what I can expect in the future and what will not be. And no surprise will become something sudden for me, because I was prepared for this and accepted it before I met it in reality.

It is also important to understand what kind of relationship with Jesus my friend has. How strong and deep are they? What place

does God occupy in the life of the one with whom I plan to spend my whole life?

One can think of thousands of uncomfortable questions that will show us who we are to each other. But they should only be asked to the one about whom I have serious plans. If I am simply friends with a person, then uncomfortable questions can be incorrect and spoil our relationship with excessive curiosity that violates a person's freedom. If my friend himself decides to share something personal, then one must be able to listen to him without retelling his secret further. But friendship for creating a family should consciously reveal everything that will be revealed in the family. And it is for me to decide what to do with everything I learn.

But the most important role in our premarital relations is played by my prayer to God that He Himself would reveal to me who my friend is and how he will behave in the family. And the Lord will necessarily create such conditions under which a person will manifest himself from the necessary side. And I will need to understand whether it is worth linking my life with someone who is not like me.

Honesty, openness, desire for change and improvement of one's character can change our views, even if they were not very good. The Lord knows how to remove the unnecessary when we ask Him about this, but for this our consent is needed. Love will cover past mistakes and forget about them, rejoicing in new opportunities and prospects. A family created in love and friendship will help remove many stereotypes from life and bring into it something ours, common, dear to the heart and bringing joy.

Questions for Reflection on This Chapter

1. Please read Prov. 15:22; Eccl. 10:1; Amos 3:3; Ruth 1:16-17; Prov. 11:29; 13:16; 14:15-16; 18:2; 19:1; 25:9; Matt. 7:17-18; Ps. 139:23-24; Job 38:1-41; 39:1-35 in light of this topic.
2. What did you understand from this topic?
3. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?

4. Is it worth learning from your friend with whom you plan to create a family what interests you?
5. What uncomfortable questions have you heard in your life?
6. Do such questions help solve important tasks before they arise?
7. Do you want to get to know better the one with whom you plan to spend your whole life? Will this not be a provocative factor?
8. Can such uncomfortable questions change something in my worldview?
9. Did God ask people uncomfortable questions? Job 38:1-41, and further. And what did Job answer? Job 40:3-5.
10. Can a friend's voice be God's voice for you?
11. If I am afraid to ask uncomfortable questions, is it worth asking other people to conduct premarital counseling with us?
12. Can my honest answers to uncomfortable questions change something in our relationship?
13. If, by asking questions, I understood that my friend is not suitable for family life, then what to do with this?
14. Am I not risking remaining alone if I start getting into my friend's soul with my questions?
15. Did you learn something useful from this lesson?

But I'm the One Who Will Live With This

The most interesting thing that awaits me in any relationship with a candidate for family is that my friend and I will have to live with everything that happens. We get to know each other, open our hearts, make choices, make decisions, and a moment comes when living without each other becomes uninteresting, and it is easier for us to marry than to part.

In whatever light our relatives see us, whatever they predict, however they warn, we will live only together, and we will have to make plans at our family council.

Communication with each other helps us to better know ourselves and our chosen one. Thus we discover new horizons, new opportunities, and interesting prospects. Over time we understand an important truth that it is best to communicate at a distance of half a meter and further, so that hormonal surges do not prevent us from looking at each other soberly.

Accidental touches, tender stroking, frequent kisses—all this, although it brings inexplicable pleasure, clouds our mind and blocks logic. And we decided to be wise and restrained, depriving ourselves of such pleasures. We do not want to lose prudence and switch to the sphere of emotional experiences.

At meeting and parting we sometimes allow ourselves a short embrace, but we can do without this for now. However, we never embrace in a lying position.

We structure our time together so as not to spend the night in one bed or in one room, or even in one house if there is no third person in it. We are in spiritual warfare and maintain vigilance in such matters.

We do not want to risk and make mistakes in choosing a life companion. And if we receive each other as a gift as husband and wife, then everything else will also be added to us and will delight us with its presence in further family relations. And now the Holy Spirit is growing in us the fruit of abstinence, and we are happy in this. Having freedom to do everything, we choose

wisdom and sobriety. And the Lord gives us interesting revelations about each other. The only case when we can be very close to each other is when we get caught in the rain and we have only one umbrella, and my friend has to take my arm and press against me so as not to get wet.

Our brethren, friends, and relatives are informed about our friendship, so they are not surprised when they see us together.

We feel good together, and we await that time when we can communicate to learn something new about each other or share what overflows the heart.

Our infatuation grows into something more constant, solid, which brings special joy, and we think that this is probably that mysterious agape-love that comes from God and stays with us forever.

For communication we chose a table that very thoroughly positioned itself between us and gives us no chance for physical intimacy. Although it can be walked around, we agreed that before the wedding we will not do this.

We noticed that our communication helps us solve big and small questions, learn to clothe our thoughts in words, and this brings us much joy and light. We admire each other in these relationships, discovering our friend. A loving friend becomes so beautiful in his love that all his shortcomings cease to exist. I see a heart that loves me, and the shell of this heart can change, comb itself, clothe itself in different clothes, put itself in order and perform any actions to add something external to this love. After all, when there is love in relationships, everything else fades into the background.

Of course, in our friendship I notice the external appearance of my friend and by it determine mood, desire to communicate, fatigue, or other concerns.

At the beginning of our friendship we did not understand how much we suit each other. There were many questions to God about this. Prayers became our guide to closer relationships. Not hearing a clear God's voice, but listening to our hearts and

to what is happening around, we understood that if the Lord does not put obstacles in our relationship, then everything is good, and we go further.

We verify all our thoughts and actions with God's will, which is revealed to us in the Bible and other spiritual works. For ourselves we decided to read, watch, and listen to the same things so that later we could share our revelations on what we studied and develop in ourselves unity of thought on many issues.

We began to notice that there are many questions that we look at differently and see in them what the friend does not pay attention to. But this does not repel us, but makes our communication more interesting.

Also in our conversations we decided to discuss not people, but ideas and plans. Gossip about others does not attract us. When information about someone reaches our ears, we prefer to pray for these people rather than gossip about them.

While we were simply friends, not planning to unite in a family, our expectations of each other and our behavior were independent but delicate. Now, being friends and communicating with the prospect of creating a family, we are already in a special way interested in everything connected with us. There is no desire to make a wrong step. And it is better to remain alone than to make a mistake in such a matter. But we do not want to be alone, and we are constantly drawn to each other. We do not resist this attraction but seek any opportunity to be near and see each other.

And when we cannot meet, then our smartphones help us out, which help us communicate even during work, or when we are on different ends of the earth.

We do not tire of loving each other, but make new discoveries for ourselves in this sphere of our relationship and constantly discuss how this love delights the heart, how interesting it is to live by it, think by it, and see each other.

The purity of our relationship puts God's approval on them, and we understand Heaven's blessing. Although sometimes we so want the Lord to address us with a voice and say that He blesses us and will bless us further, all our lives. Oh, how pleasant it would be to experience this! But we do not hear a voice, and we have to pray and fast a lot to distinguish it within ourselves and receive conviction that I am friends with the right person and am myself the right friend.

And how can we teach others, build good relationships, if we start talking about supernatural intervention of God when others do not experience this. Therefore we understand that God answers through the mind and heart to those people who, knowing His will, live by it and seek glory for God even in personal relationships.

We have discussed and continue to discuss all difficult and uncomfortable questions. And even if in something there is misunderstanding or disagreement, then communication helps to weigh everything soberly and change it if there is desire.

Rudeness and foolishness do not cling to us, and even when we allow ourselves jokes and innocent fun, they do not defile our friendship but adorn it with their sincerity and trust.

Our relationship rests in love for one another, and we begin to understand that if this continues in the family, then it will become a happy union in which we will be well.

Questions for Reflection on This Chapter

1. Please read Amos 3:3; 1 Pet. 1:22; 5:8; Prov. 8:1-21; 15:17; 17:17; 21:9; 31:10-12; 1 Cor. 7:28,32-34; 15:34; 1 Thess. 5:4-9; 1 Tim. 3:11; Luke 6:31; Lev. 19:16; Song 5:10; Gen. 2:24 in light of this topic.
2. What did you understand from this topic?
3. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
4. Does the Bible prohibit touches to each other of people in love?
5. If in the Word of God there is no prohibition on embraces, touches, and kisses of people in love, is it worth practicing

this before the wedding? Is there another measure of such experiences and relationships?

6. Which of your close people after your wedding will share with you the joys and features of your family life?
7. Is it important to build a happy family? What is the difference between happy relationships and ordinary ones?
8. Do you think that if both people do everything for mutual happiness, will they succeed in something?
9. Should the families of people believing in God differ from worldly unions? If yes, then in what and how?
10. How does God relate to wise homebuilders? Is it important to Him that they only be fruitful and multiply, or does He expect something more from the family?
11. If friends who love each other understand that a wedding is necessary, should they create a family? Will this not be a tragedy for their relationship?
12. Do you think it will be right to create a family with that life friend whom you love, value, whose communication you rejoice in, with whom you like to spend time, about whom you think day and night, and this is mutual?
13. Why should one not rely on feelings when choosing a life companion? If you feel good in tender embraces of each other, then why not marry and lawfully continue this pleasure?
14. Do you know unhappy families whose members before marriage loved each other, and then everything began to collapse for them? What is the cause of such relationships?
15. Is there a chance for happiness for those who wisely and with love approach the creation of a happy union and do everything possible so that the future family lives in happiness?

The Beauty of a Friend's Heart

"...God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him." (1 John 4:16).

The Lord loves His creation and tenderly cares for it. Even the most wicked people are not deprived of God's love—their hearts continue to beat, and the rains of blessings never cease to water their lives. But does the sinful man see such care and love toward himself? Does he fall on his knees in tenderness and joy at the realization that he is loved by God? Sadly, we witness a persistent indifference toward the Giver of life and an insatiable desire to receive His generosity and blessings.

Answer honestly this question: "Why are you waiting for Christ? Because you are tired of the evil in this world, or because you love Jesus?" Try to remember this question and ask yourself daily.

There is something beautiful in love that goes beyond standard thinking. You love because it is right, and it makes life more meaningful. In the light of love, every person looks rather unusual, and you begin to see many good qualities of their soul that are skillfully hidden beneath the outward importance of behavior. God loves every person always and unconditionally. But who among people rejoices at such an attitude and thinks about their Heavenly Father? Who is inspired by God's constant agape? And how do people react to the words, "God loves you"?

But in the thinking of people indifferent to God, changes begin to happen when they see human love toward themselves, hear kind words addressed to them, feel gentle touches, and receive useful gifts. All this stirs their minds, and they try to understand what is happening. The love of God, expressed through man, becomes visible and tangible, and many are ready to accept it, receiving maximum blessings from such an attitude. However, usually they do not thank God but glorify His messengers. Yet the Lord is ready to continue blessing His creation through the hands of those who desire to be channels of His love.

All of us who live and breathe on this earth are God's creations and belong to Him by right of the Creator. But among us there are His children, who are born of the Holy Spirit through faith in Jesus Christ. And this is a special people who are called God's children and have an extraordinary status in the eyes of Heaven. These differences should not be ignored. God's love for all people is unconditional, but His sons and daughters receive special blessings from above because they are children of God. Yet they do not always understand the care and love of their Heavenly Father toward them. That is why we were given the commandment to love one another.

Heaven expects each of us to understand Christ's commandment about our mutual love. And in such relationships, there can be nothing improper, for it is the clear command of the Lord. But somehow, for many of God's children, this commandment always seems new, or they simply do not know it, though they remember that it exists.

To love one another is a mutual, conscious agreement about unconditional, good, reciprocal relationships with each other. One-sided relationships are also love, but not love for one another. It is more like a one-way street, where you cannot go back, and no one is moving toward you.

If in my life a miracle of transformation happens, and I receive the gift of love from above, this does not yet mean that I have fulfilled Christ's commandment to love one another. For this I need a loving friend, or at least someone who does not yet love me but, like me, desires to be obedient to God. The greatest joy and wonderful event happens when these two loving loners meet and begin to love one another.

I cannot fulfill Christ's commandment in passing or casually. Just telling someone that you love them and hearing the same in return is not love for one another but an exchange of kind words.

To love one another is a conscious decision of two parties who understand that now they belong to each other in this love, and their lives have intertwined into one united agape with common

points of connection. It is not a marital union, but the desire of two hearts of God to unite in mutual love and their mutual agreement for deep and unending development of subsequent relationships. From childhood, we all dream of such love and wait for it all our lives, thinking it is worth giving everything for. But what do I do to receive it? And the Faithful Witness counsels me to buy from Him this wonderful gold of heavenly origin.

Love for one another calls me to open my heart to my friend and my friend to open their soul to me. This does not mean that I will immediately see everything and discover all the treasures of my neighbor's soul. It means that now we can continually discover the valuable qualities of our hearts in each other and share these discoveries with each other and with the people around us. And this is an eternal process of eternal discoveries of one another. That is why we are given Eternity—to learn at least a little about how wonderful and amazing we are on the inside, containing in the depths of our hearts countless treasures of good qualities of the soul.

In love for one another, we comprehend the power and depth of this agape. But this does not mean that such knowledge confines us in a closed union of two loving hearts. In learning to love one another, we receive heavenly knowledge of this love and are able to share it with others, passing on to our neighbors the experience of our relationship that was born in the practical exercise of our love for one another.

God desires to see such love in our families as well. But sometimes families are created for the union of bodies, without the desire to know the heart of one's partner. But even this can be corrected if a mutual decision is made to love one another even within the family and to do everything necessary for this from one's own side.

Love for one another opens up many perspectives in serving God in the spirit of love. We unite in joint prayers and ask for many things, and when we are in this union, the promise of Jesus begins to work for us—that if two agree to ask about anything, they will receive an answer from the Father (Matthew

18:19). A friend's love becomes for me additional inspiration and support. Even when a friend is physically far away, their kind words can bring true miracles into my life. We become God's blessing for one another, enriching each other without bringing sorrow.

Love for one another is a great mystery of fellowship between two loving hearts that can only be understood within these relationships. The depth of such agape is covered by God's hand, and no one from outside can open that inner world which unites friends in their mutual love.

We do not need to wait for the Second Coming to begin keeping God's commandment. Eternity has already begun through our faith in Jesus, and our love for one another opens to us all the beauty of those heavenly relationships of the distant future, which we can already experience today and now.

And whatever wonders I may discover in my dear friend, all this I also see in my precious Jesus. It is He who is given to me in the heart of my neighbor, and to my neighbor—through me. And in our agape for one another we pass everything on to the Lord, from whom we have received it all, to return it back in the spirit of love and gratitude.

Questions for Reflection on this Chapter

1. Please read Proverbs 17:17; 1 Corinthians 16:14; John 13:34-35; 1 Thessalonians 3:12; 5:21-22; 2 Thessalonians 3:5; Jeremiah 31:3; 33:3; 1 Peter 1:22; 1 Timothy 1:5; Colossians 3:14; Philippians 1:8-11; Ephesians 3:18-19; 4:15; Galatians 5:6; 1 Corinthians 13:12-13; Song of Solomon 5:10 in light of this chapter.

2. What did you understand from this topic?

3. What other Bible verses came to your mind?

4. Is it worth starting something you do not plan to continue?

5. Do you think if you and your friend agree to love one another from a pure heart, something will come of it?

6. Should I talk to God about my relationship with my friend and ask His blessing for our friendship?
7. Is it enough to have at least one friend with whom you will love one another, or does God have other plans for this matter?
8. What is the purpose of mutual love for one another? Would polite treatment be enough?
9. Do I fall under the curse of the law if I choose a friend of the opposite sex?
10. What did Jesus mean when He gave the commandment to love one another?
11. Does the commandment to love one another belong to those commands that must be strictly observed?
12. Do you believe that in mutual love many more beautiful qualities of a friend's soul are revealed?
13. Is it acceptable to tell a friend with whom you share mutual love about your love for them? Or must this be proven by deeds?
14. If I do not yet have such friends with whom I share mutual love, where should I look for them, and is it possible to find them?
15. Is the commandment to love one another still relevant in our time?

Victory in Communication

The Lord has endowed each of us with the gift of communication. From childhood we are taught our native language, in which we can freely express our thoughts and feelings and understand what we hear from those around us.

Having reason and the ability to analyze, we are given the gift of distinguishing between good and evil, and our will can make a conscious choice, preferring the life path and the direction of thought that is formed under the influence of my surroundings.

The Lord created us for Himself, giving us one another at the same time. Though sin separated us from God, the Lord did everything possible to bring us back to Himself and reveal His love to us.

When I understand that God exists and that He rewards those who seek Him, then I begin to communicate with Him, and in this communication I find everything necessary for the salvation of my soul.

Communication is the ability to express our thoughts and plans while understanding the plans and words of others. It is the opportunity to exchange actions toward one another, accepting or rejecting what is offered to you. Without communication, we cannot be truly human.

Communication with God implies an exchange of plans, knowledge, and abilities, the expectation of the fulfillment of His promises, and the alignment of our goals with God's will. God does not enter into dialogue with me in the usual human sense of the word. Our conversation takes place through my prayers and my appeals to Him on various issues. And He speaks to me through His written Word, through my conscience by the Holy Spirit, through inspired people who left their works to the world, and through my neighbors who are sensitive to the voice of the Lord.

Through communication with God, I learn about many benefits of spiritual life, I understand my mistakes, I have the

opportunity to correct what is broken and ruined, I receive what I could never gain by myself, and much more.

In prayer, I express my faith and my love to my Savior, I speak of my plans, share my thoughts and desires, and receive an answer to all of them.

The commandment of Christ about our love for one another implies a special plan for the end time. The Lord desires to dwell in us and in our communication through this very love. The disciples of Christ lived for more than three years with the One who is Love, but they did not learn to love one another. Jesus had to emphasize this in His commandment, which He gave before His death.

It is also worth noting that the command to love one another was given to a close circle of dedicated disciples, united by the love of Christ. The Lord could have given this commandment somewhere in the street, but He did not. Friendship with people of a different spirit was not part of God's plan. Though He calls me to be friendly with everyone, only those who love Christ and have communion with Him can possess love for one another. Even if your brother bears the name of Christ but does not have His Spirit, he will not respond to your love with love. He simply does not know how and will not do it. This is the difference of love for one another—that it can only be possessed by the disciples of Jesus. And by this sincere agape, everyone will know that Christians are followers of the Lord.

Love for one another implies our mutual communication, in which we open our hearts and allow our neighbor to enter into those depths of our soul that are inaccessible to the rest of the world.

In such communication we find meeting points, discover sharp corners, determine forbidden territories, and uncover countless treasures of the soul buried under mountains of fears and stereotypes. Love knows how to discover everything beautiful in a friend and joyfully bring it to light, surprising the friend with the uniqueness of its discoveries.

A friend, with whom we have decided to love one another, becomes for me an unexplored planet that I begin to study in every way. The devoted heart of my neighbor is a wonderful platform for the exchange of spiritual values, blessings, revelations, and experiences. We seek new treasures in each other and find them, rejoicing together in these marvelous discoveries. Our communicators are tuned to the same wavelength. We listen and hear each other; we understand the language of the heart. Even unfinished sentences are caught in half a word.

At some point in our friendship, we dare to speak about our love for one another. Our minds are not yet accustomed to such conversations, but we take this step, trying to understand what is happening in us and between us. To be honest with each other, we agree to share everything that is happening in our hearts, even the bad, so that no misunderstandings arise between us. And knowing that your friend speaks to you the pure truth, you can see the whole picture of love and friendship as it really is, without conjectures and distortions.

Sincerity and openness in communication create mutual trust, and it becomes easy for you to let a friend into places where no one else is admitted. There is also an agreement not to share with others confidential information about a friend that is available only to you. The only Person with whom I can discuss my friend, revealing all the secrets of his heart, is Jesus. My other friends should know nothing of our communication. This belongs only to us and my friend.

But there are also open blessings of our friendship, which I gladly share with others. These are the stories of the wonderful person the Lord has given me, how He taught me to love him, and how many beautiful qualities of the soul I have found in this dear friend.

Speaking to each other of our love, we begin to know from within and understand how deep this love is, how it unites us, what thoughts and feelings it produces, and from what source it comes. We also share what the enemy of the soul tries to

impose on us and how dangerous it is to listen to his whisperings.

The breadth and depth of our knowledge of each other does not come all at once, but gradually opens up, day by day, illuminating for us more and more brightly the beauty of our hearts. All this is so unusual and extraordinary! Sometimes there is a fear of whether everything is right in our love for one another. And immediately we consult with God to understand whether we are standing on a dangerous path and ask Him to direct us to the Eternal Way.

Communication with one another helps to identify many dangers even in their very beginnings and to gain victory before temptation comes. Openness and trust help immediately to share with a friend those doubts that have entered the mind. Together we can very quickly resolve all these matters in the best way. As a result of our love for one another, we begin to love each other with a pure heart, knowing whom you love and why.

Love for one friend does not prevent me from loving another friend and those whom the Lord will still give me. And the experience of relationships with my first friend I use in communication with other friends as well. And we do not hide this from each other or become jealous, but rejoice that our spiritual family grows and develops.

It is difficult to take the first steps, not knowing what is right and where to go. Communication with one another and with God sheds light on our friendship, and we confidently do and try what will lead us to the complete victory of love in us. And we are no longer afraid to love, to give happiness, and to move forward.

Questions for Reflection on This Chapter

1. Please read 1 John 1:7; John 13:34-35; Proverbs 10:22; 13:20; 17:17; 18:24; 21:10; 22:24; 27:9,17; 1 Peter 1:22; 1 Corinthians 1:9; 15:33; Philippians 1:6-11; 2:1-2 in the light of this chapter.
2. What did you understand from this topic?

3. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
4. Is it important to have communication in friendship?
5. Can many issues be best resolved through communication with a friend? Or should specialists be called in?
6. Will a wicked person become righteous because of friendship with you? (Proverbs 29:27).
7. If your friend has decided to love you, should you respond the same way?
8. Where can you find a loving friend? Is it worth looking for one at all?
9. Do you think that if you and your friend decide to love one another, will it work out for you?
10. Do you believe that love for one another exists?
11. How can I determine whether I love my friend and whether he loves me?
12. Should I seek new friends for mutual love if I already have one such friend?
13. Is a loving friend a coincidence, a gift from the Lord, the goal of my search, destiny, or something else?
14. How do you imagine the love of one friend for another?
15. What should I do if I decide to love a friend, but he avoids me?

Do Not Judge a Friend for the Truth

Sincerity is a quality of a person expressed in honesty, openness, and the absence of false motives or masks in communication and behavior. It is the ability to be sincere with oneself and with others. It is faithfulness to one's convictions, the absence of fear of judgment, the ability to find compromises in relationships, and to seek solutions to problems in difficult situations.

Sincerity also implies the ability to be open to discussing one's mistakes and shortcomings without fear of judgment or blame, as well as the willingness to acknowledge one's successes and achievements without false modesty. This is an important quality that contributes to healthy self-esteem and the development of our relationships with the world around us.

Being honest with one another, especially with the person who has become your other half, is the norm of life, and sincerity helps to build family relationships in the spirit of complete trust and respect.

One careless word of judgment, mockery, or indignation toward a friend's sincerity can quickly close his heart and prompt him to hide the truth altogether in order to protect the soul from "blows" and unnecessary condemnation.

When a child only begins to speak and understand, he has not yet learned anything bad and always behaves sincerely in his judgments. The first ones to whom he comes with his directness are his parents. Not every truth is pleasant to hear, especially if it reveals something damaging to the child's character or inconsistent with the family's way of life. And the child hears in response to his sincerity words of indignation, condemnation, or suffers quick punishment without understanding the reason. In the mind of the little one, defense mechanisms immediately switch on to protect the young mind from harm, and the next time the child prefers to remain silent or to lie in order to avoid condemnation or a negative reaction from the parents. Such

thinking quickly becomes fixed in the consciousness and continues to function in communication with others as well.

Such a shift in thinking is common to everyone, because the world in which we live is quite dangerous for a sincere soul and can bring many problems.

But to live with a closed heart is uninteresting, and every person longs to have a true friend with whom one can be sincere and open without fear of judgment or criticism.

Wishing to be sincere, I can deliberately act in this spirit, but if my neighbor is not willing to respect my openness and uses it against me, then I am forced to change the model of the relationship or end it altogether. Love teaches me how to be honest while not giving what is holy and precious to those who will not value it, turning my truth against me.

When people get acquainted for the purpose of friendship or building a family, they begin to test one another, share intimate things, and open up gradually as trust and the duration of communication grow. Each of my reactions and opinions can become either another step forward in the development of the relationship or a boundary in my own or another's heart that must not be crossed.

It is very easy to judge another, but will it benefit that person and strengthen your relationship?

Let's take an example. Two lonely people meet and decide to become friends for a serious relationship. At some point, he wishes to express his sincere feelings and asks her permission for a kiss. She, being a girl of honest principles, immediately refuses in categorical form and makes it clear that she is not a woman of light morals, setting an ultimatum to end the friendship if this ever happens again.

But what was her friend's guilt? He sincerely expressed his feelings, which perhaps for the first time in his life prompted him to take such a step. He decided to share with her his most precious experience, which he could express in this question, without daring to take action.

One can react to such proposals in different ways. To say “no” or “not now,” to ask a counter-question to understand the seriousness of intentions. And if this is considered a violation of her principles, then calmly and with a smile explain, without blaming her friend for his rashness. And it is worth understanding that it was not only a desire to kiss, but an expression of the deepest trust and joy which he decided to show in this way. He did not attack his friend, but asked her a question, expecting her to choose how to answer. And he was ready to listen—and he listened carefully.

Another example from family life. A wife decides to tell her husband about a new purchase she made at a sale, which so delighted her heart but took the last of their money. The husband, knowing the value of money, immediately began to complain about how much she buys and how their apartment is turning into a warehouse of junk. But what was the wife experiencing as she shared her sincere joy? She was happy and wanted to share this with her beloved. She had the best motives and saw in her husband the one who would share her joy. If the husband understood how much she values him by sharing the little joys of life, he might have been able to express his protest differently and explain that now they would have to live in debt.

We pass such tests from early childhood throughout our lives. And if my inadequate reaction to a person’s sincerity was a mistake, then I can quickly acknowledge it and correct everything. But if it is my spirit that drives my thoughts and feelings, then even the most open heart will close to me, and the blame will lie only with me.

A sincere person is very truthful in his attitude, and he expects acceptance and the same sincerity from me.

If you notice that your loved one is not telling you something or avoids a direct answer, do not rush to accuse him of insincerity. Most likely, the problem lies in your own heart and how you react to “uncomfortable truth.” It may also be that your life partner has problems from childhood and is unable to live and communicate otherwise. In that case, your love and wisdom can help him understand this and begin a new path of trust and

understanding. Everything can be learned if there is mutual agreement.

How does God treat us when we sincerely tell Him everything, both bad and good? He listens to us, forgives, cleanses, teaches us to live differently, and treats us with special tenderness and care. He knows how and when to punish us, where it is necessary to rebuke, and where simply to remain silent and let us understand and correct things ourselves. It is very important for God to show us that He always loves us, and that we are precious to Him no matter how we behave or what our mood is. For Him, there are no small things, everything is important, and He teaches us to value one another and to be sincere in the simplicity of heart.

We should train ourselves to listen with the soul and to understand a person's motives, even if he does something wrong.

Without mutual trust and sincere relationships, it is difficult to build shared happiness.

We read the golden rule: "Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets" (Matthew 7:12).

Life in this world has forced each of us to build fences in relationships out of fear, but the Lord calls us to love one another and to be sincere in this love, building bridges. And this is worth learning.

Questions for Reflection on This Chapter

1. Please read John 8:15; 1 John 4:18; Romans 13:10; 14:13; Matthew 7:1-6; 2 Samuel 22:26; Job 33:3; Psalm 15:1-3; 55:14-15; Proverbs 27:6; 2 Corinthians 8:7-8; Philippians 2:20; James 4:11 in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What did you understand from this topic?
4. Have you ever been in a situation where you did not want to be sincere because of an inadequate attitude toward you?

5. What do you feel when you are scolded or punished for telling the truth?
6. Do you know moments when you yourself were irritated by the sincerity of others?
7. How can sincerity be expressed in ways that are unpleasant to hear?
8. How does God treat you when you honestly confess your sins and mistakes to Him?
9. Should we watch how we react to the sincerity of others?
10. Should sincerity be present in family relationships?
11. What should I do if I want to be sincere in my family, but it threatens me with scandal or undeserved accusations?
12. Should I be offended by someone for their honesty?
13. How can one learn to always be sincere when one is used to living differently?
14. Did this lesson help you understand something important?
15. How can I be sincere if it constantly creates problems?

Engagement

Engagement is the decision of a man and a woman to enter into marriage. In many cultures this has become a good tradition. And in it there is something solemn, bringing much joy in the anticipation of the celebration.

The groom, as a rule, desires to make this event romantic and long remembered. Sometimes the engagement can be captured on camera to later show friends and also to remember themselves in their young years.

Friendship with the purpose of building a family leads us to love from a pure heart and to the manifestation of mutual respect. Although we have plans for one another ahead of us, sober love so strongly unites our hearts that we acknowledge such a relationship only in God, not only among those who plan to marry, but also among those who believe in Jesus.

Love for one another has opened a beautiful path to our hearts, and in this experience we have understood how simply and sincerely we can love every person whom the Lord gives us.

We became so attached to one another that it became easier for us to create a family and continue to develop a relationship within it, rather than create nothing at all.

Love from God is wonderful in that it is not selfish and thinks first about the happiness of one's neighbor, bringing joy to my heart when I can share love.

My chosen one is very dear to me, and I love her so much that I could spend hours listing all her virtues and discovering something new and special in her character. I understand that she is the one who, becoming my wife, will be the object of my constant attention, to whom I will never cease to serve and please throughout my life.

And I also understood one very important point in our friendship. I love my friend, I ask God for this love, and I receive it. And this love respects the choice of another person, even the dearest one. If suddenly my chosen one finds someone

better and leaves me, I will not cease to love her as a friend and will do everything possible to ensure that she is happy in her new choice. And if I am invited to their wedding, I will give them the best gift I can think of. Although perhaps my pillow will be wet with tears. But these are just thoughts aloud, and this is not about us. Everything is right with us.

So, we came to the conclusion that we need a wedding, and our relationship has brought us exactly to this. I do not wish to take such a step in secret from our loved ones. My imagination sometimes surprises me, and I develop a unique plan of how best to make the proposal. I involve my friends so they can be witnesses and capture the moment on camera. My chosen one pretends to suspect nothing, although perhaps she truly does not. At the most suitable moment of our next meeting, against the background of beautiful nature, I give a signal to my videographers and solemnly carry out my wonderful plan for our shared future, in which such words should sound: "Will you marry me?" The bride thinks for a moment and gives a short (hopefully positive) answer, and then allows herself to be embraced in honor of such an event. Our friends are delighted and joyfully congratulate us.

In fact, the engagement has taken place. But all our loved ones need this event to be presented more officially with an established date of the wedding celebration. Before agreeing on these dates, my friend and I must clarify some details, inform our parents of our decision, and make an announcement in our church.

The period between engagement and wedding should not be long, but not too short either. I think that three months, which will be spent on preparation, is the maximum.

First, we submit an application to the civil registry office to legalize our relationship, and there we choose a convenient time for us.

It is desirable that our celebration falls on a weekend so that invited guests can attend peacefully. We decided that Saturday should remain a day of rest so that our friends are not involved

in excessive fuss over wedding preparations. We also decided not to plan anything for Friday.

We also pay attention to ensure that women's days do not fall on this time and end long before our event.

After that, we choose an ordained minister and agree with him and the leadership of our congregation on the day of the wedding ceremony and the scenario of our celebration.

We want our union to have God's blessing, so we do not rush events and continue to keep our distance from each other and live separately, although our conversations together may already touch on many delicate questions that were previously inconvenient to ask.

We understand that, conditionally, we already belong to one another, and we do not want to change our decision, and this awareness fills our lives with special experiences. And even the "rose-colored glasses" are not so frightening, but we still do not want to put them on.

Our prayers have taken on a different form and have become more calm and serious. We continue to ask for God's will, for protection, and for blessing on our future. Without God, it is better to build nothing.

If suddenly my friend decides before the wedding to leave God or the church and go into the world, then I will cancel all scheduled dates and take back all my proposals, notifying all our loved ones of the change in circumstances. Although through all this I will remain a friend.

Engagement is not yet a family, and much can be changed if something dangerous is revealed in our communication. There is no need to risk one's spiritual life and salvation, but it is better to decide everything in the light of God's will.

I believe in God not for receiving and satisfying personal needs, but in understanding higher values and expectations from the Savior Himself. He paid a very high price for our happiness and fenced it within the framework of His law so that obedience to His will would be a constant protection for us.

My chosen one, fortunately, turned out to be a faithful daughter of God and had views similar to mine, not planning to unite her life with an unbeliever. Such conditions did not become an obstacle to the anticipation of upcoming joy, and we spend time happily together, thoroughly discussing all questions of the wedding celebration. The less money we and our parents have for this event, the fewer and simpler our plans.

The only area in which I do not want to put up any obstacles is the choice of the bride's dress. Here my friend must decide for herself what and how to wear, but in such a way that everything is decent and covers what must be covered according to the reform of dress. Although I do not interfere with this choice and close my eyes to the price, I openly express my protest if the wife's body will be uncovered. Modesty and chastity must be everywhere.

We also choose the place and cuisine for the wedding feast, considering the reform of diet and the tastes of the invited guests. Alcohol is unequivocally excluded from our menu, and its absence will not make our celebration boring. And our friends are already preparing a program to entertain all the guests.

How much fuss in all these events! Things could be simpler, but this is how it is customary for us, and in this there is something solemn and significant. For there will also be a great celebration in Heaven at the wedding of Christ and His bride. And we plan to be there as the main participants.

Questions for Reflection on This Chapter

1. Please read Amos 3:3; John 13:35; Genesis 24:49-52, 57-59, 67; 29:18-21; Ezekiel 18:4-9; 1 Corinthians 7:28, 33-34; Song of Solomon 2:4; Colossians 3:14; Philippians 1:8-11; Revelation 19:7-9 in light of this topic.
2. What did you understand from this topic?
3. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
4. What is the purpose of engagement?

5. What happens in the hearts and minds of those who have declared their decision to create a family?
6. Is it possible to marry without an engagement? If so, how would that look?
7. Read Ruth 1:16-17. How can this statement be described? Does the Bible give us any useful advice in this? Should every bride think this way before entering into marriage?
8. Have you had a desire to learn the marriage vow from the book of Ruth 1:16-17 and apply it in your life?
9. Is it worth promising yourself to an unfamiliar friend before marriage? What if he leaves you?
10. Is it important to always be a friend, even if it did not work out to create a family? (Proverbs 17:17).
11. Does the Lord act in my life according to my decisions?
12. Will Jesus make a proposal to His bride before the wedding? (Revelation 3:18).
13. For what period is the marriage union concluded? And how long does it last? Should we understand the answer to this question?
14. Do those who wish to marry have the opportunity before the wedding to think everything through well before giving final consent?
15. Is love necessary in creating a family? How can we understand that it is genuine and mutual?

A Letter to My Future Wife

One of the students of the Agape School of Love, under the influence of this very love and learning the science of happiness, love, and friendship, decided to bring joy to the one who is not yet in his life but about whom he already knows what to do. And in this decision, our hero thought of writing a letter to the girl who may appear at any time, so that later, when living with her in marriage, he could hand her this message and compare reality with expectation. Although it is not customary to read other people's letters, we will make an exception for the sake of those who are building a happy family.

Below is this very message to the future:

"Hello, my dear half, peace to you. I am writing you this letter even before I have met you, to honestly tell you how much I love you.

Perhaps we already know each other, but not yet well enough to build a family. But I pray for you every day and make important decisions regarding you. I know that the Lord hears me and is already teaching me to love you, shaping my character in His likeness. One day He will introduce us and give us to each other, and it will be so wonderful! I do not know who you are or what you will be like, but I can tell you about who I am and how I will love you.

I have very high requirements for myself, so I am in no hurry to find you; I want first to deal with my own characteristics so that it will be good, cozy, and comfortable for you to live with me.

I have taken you as my wife for my whole life and therefore I am interested in you being happy living with me under one roof and sharing your joys and cares with me. It is written that I will think about how to please you, so I am already trying to arrange this matter so that everything will be right, pure, and blessed.

I have learned what you should not be and what to pay attention to so as not to make a mistake and choose instead of the real gift from the Lord some counterfeit. Forgive me that at

the beginning of our friendship I was very observant to understand that you are you and that you are from the Lord. But the Lord day by day revealed to me your inner beauty and let me understand that something good can be built with you, so I did not resist long and chose you.

But my choice remains mine and does not depend on yours. You could at any moment refuse me the continuation of our relationship, and I would take it as a sign from the Lord and would not bother you. Your freedom is very dear to me, and I respect your will so much that I cannot even ask anything for myself, waiting for you to decide everything yourself. And you decided to be my friend. This is so amazing! And what did you find so good in me?! You are a mystery to me from the very first day of our acquaintance, but I will try to solve you throughout all Eternity and will be very glad of this.

Thank you very much for deciding to become my friend and helping me learn many good things about myself and about your spiritual world.

Every time something new was revealed to me in you, I hastened to tell you about it, and we marveled at these discoveries together and began to study and apply them more deeply in life. You are an amazing person! I could not even imagine that in such a fragile being there could be such boundless strength and resources, which were initially laid in you and waited for their treasure seeker, who, to my surprise, turned out to be me.

In friendship with you I understood that your mood can change like the seasons, and in this there are its difficulties and charms, but I accept you as you are and will not try to remake you. I am more interested now in how I can better adjust to you to learn to anticipate your desires and expectations and do everything possible to make you feel good. This is my choice—to love you as a friend, and now also as a wife.

I am not interested in the opinion of those around me, although I always rejoice at wise advice. But I understand that I will have to live with you, and therefore it is with you that I will solve our

common tasks, arranging everything so that we are both satisfied.

Please remember the main thing. You are my wife forever, and whatever you may become, externally or internally, I will never leave you. You are given to me by God to always be mine. And only death will separate us.

If you decide to make me the head of our family and will with all your soul and understanding support this choice, then I will serve you all my life and rejoice that in our family kingdom there is a queen. If you choose a different attitude toward me, then I promise that I will always love you and do everything the Lord teaches me in such a situation. I grant you full freedom to be who you decide to be and will always respect your choice.

Also please take into account that I also know how to choose good things and will expect that my choice will be accepted with respect.

Imagine how wonderful it will be if our choice of a common path and spirit coincides, and we can go together in one direction, loving each other from a pure heart.

I also want to assure you that for me you are the best person in the world, the best wife, the best friend of life. All this you are and always will be. I am not interested in other people. In our family you will always be in the first and highest place.

Remember also that your external beauty and attractiveness are given to you by God to delight my heart. And I see not only your face but also your heart, adding to this my love, and in this combination you will always be the most beautiful person for me, no matter how time changes you. Therefore, I want to ask you not to spend much time in front of the mirror for the demands of the world, but sometimes to ask me how I find you. And I will tell you the whole truth about how beautiful you are. But these are just thoughts aloud.

I like in you that you allow yourself to be loved and let me into your heart, accepting everything I want to share with you. When we were friends, it was already so joyful to get to know

you from the inside and give you my love and friendship. And now, when we have become the closest people, I imagine what happiness in knowing each other awaits us ahead. I can now discover in you so many amazing things and use them by the right of a husband that even my breath is taken away by such luxury. I am going to study you all my life and then all Eternal life to always find something new in you and thank God for such a miracle. You represent a special interest for me.

And also there are only three things I like in you:

1. Everything you do;
2. Everything you say;
3. Everything you are.

That is why I chose you, so that you would be mine and always be available for my love for you.

I think that, reading these lines, you are surprised at how accurately I describe everything. This is not me; it is the Lord inspiring me to set such goals in our building of happiness. Therefore, I so boldly describe everything I have been taught.

I love you, my dear beloved person called wife. You so gladden my heart and bring so many blessings by your presence in my life! To be continued.

Your husband.”

Questions for Reflection on This Lesson

1. Please read Ecclesiastes 9:9; Ephesians 5:25-23; Colossians 3:19; 1 Timothy 1:5-6; Proverbs 4:4; 17:17; 19:14; 30:18-19; 31:10-12, 25, 30; Jeremiah 31:3; Song of Solomon 4:1,7,9-12; 1 Peter 1:22; Romans 12:9-10 in light of this topic.
2. What did you understand from this topic?
3. What biblical stories came to your mind?
4. Is it right to write letters to those you do not yet know?
5. Do you think such messages can tune a person to the right attitude?

6. What did you like about this lesson?
7. Would you like to receive such letters from your family members?
8. Did the Lord write a message of His love to us before we met Him? (Romans 5:8-10).
9. Do you think if a person sets himself in advance to love you and decides to love you, will something come of it? Or does he have to somehow prove it especially?
10. Is it right to decide in advance to love someone who may soon appear in your life?
11. Do you think such letters bring joy to their recipient, or are they words without meaning?
12. Have you already read what the Lord wrote to you? If so, share your joy with us. (Isaiah 43:4).
13. Have you written a similar letter to your dear friend?
14. Do you think your loved ones would be pleased to receive such letters from you?
15. What should I do if no one sends me such letters and perhaps never will?

A Letter to My Future Husband

One of the students of the Agape School of Love, having discovered many truths and accepted many principles into her life, decided to write a letter to her future husband. This message is purely her personal opinion and may differ from your worldview.

I share this writing with you, wishing that every husband someday would receive something like this.

“My dear, beloved person called husband. I am so happy that I became your wife and can now spend my whole life taking care of you, doing everything possible to make it good, cozy, joyful, and warm for you with me. Now, as I write these lines, I still do not know you, you have not yet appeared in my life or paid attention to me. I know nothing about you—where you are from, what your name is—but I will call you ‘beloved.’ I know that you exist and are looking for me, and I am not hiding. I know that you are praying for me, and the Lord is preparing me so that at the right time He will give you a gift and turn your attention to me. And I will at that time quietly look at you and pray softly, trying to understand whether you are the answer to my prayers, and listen with my heart if you are the man from the Lord.

I have decided that I will never marry someone who has not first married Christ. Forgive me for watching you closely for a long time, trying to understand what relationship you have with my Savior.

I am so glad that we became friends before having any thoughts about family, and in this friendship we made many important discoveries about each other. If you had not first become my friend, I would not have accepted any proposal from you.

I really like the story of Ruth and especially her marriage vow from Ruth 1:16-17: ‘...do not urge me to leave you or to return from following you. For where you go, I will go, and where you lodge, I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God. Where you die, I will die, and there will I be

buried. May the Lord do so to me, and more also, if anything but death parts me from you.'

I learned it by heart and now I am going to tell you the same thing but already from my own name. You are my husband and I am your wife. Where you go, I will go. I will be your sail on our ship, and you will be my captain with whom I will pass through all storms and calm waters. It is so joyful that we will now always be together and I can delight your heart every day.

I love you so much, my dear beloved husband. I am so happy that you chose me and proposed to me to be your other half!

Although I have many expectations and I have already voiced them before our wedding, I am still very interested in how you will build our relationship and how I will help you in this.

I really want you to always love me, even when you are too busy for me. I understand that this must be voluntary and from the heart, but still I ask you to love me always. For me this is the most important thing. And I promise that I will return to you much more of this love than you imagine. And I already love you, my dear beloved person. I constantly pray about this and learn to love you before you appear in my life.

In my love you can be free and do what God leads you to do. I will always respect your choice and give you the right to make mistakes. I will not judge you for your wrong decisions but will be your support and your rear guard. For me you will always be the best, and I will always learn to love and accept you as you are.

Now I am studying psychology and the structure of men's thinking and marvel at how different you are. And it is this difference that most attracts me to you. I am now acquiring the necessary knowledge to later serve you with it.

I anticipate the time when I will be able to embrace you and reveal to you all the secrets of my love for you, without expecting anything in return. Be yourself, and I will accept you and adapt to you.

And I also dream of learning more about you, studying your heart, discovering for myself the beauty of your soul, which you so well hide from curious superficial people.

Thank you for choosing me from the whole world. I am so grateful to you for your choice. I think it was the best decision that changed your life.

Now I am learning at the feet of Jesus to love—to love every person and even my enemies. But my thoughts always return to you, my beloved friend, and I understand that it is precisely love for you that will open much more to me and will be for you the greatest blessing you could not even dream of. I so want you to bathe in my love for you, and I will do everything to make it good for you. But I am only learning and do not imagine how this happens in life. Will you help me? Will you tell me what pleases you the most?

And I am also learning to cook healthy and tasty food so that you will receive through it everything necessary for your body, which at last has become mine. Remember that you are now mine, and all that is yours and mine is now considered ours. And I will share all your cares with you and give everything to Jesus so that it will be easier for us to live.

I have set myself to rejoice in you at all times, and now I am already learning this.

And I have also read that we, women, can change and be unpredictable. I so do not want to cause you inconvenience with this. Please be gracious to me if you see these changes. I will try to do everything to make you happy in my presence.

Oh, if only you knew how I rejoice that you will someday appear in my life. Such a good, dear friend.

I will never try to interfere with your personal relationship with God. This is the foundation of our family happiness, on which we can build something beautiful and strong. But I will support this spirit in my own life, having my own personal relationship with Jesus, and He will teach me to love you.

I already want to embrace you, my dear and beloved future husband. Even though now all these words of mine are conditioned by your appearance in this role, my feelings for you are already ready for the right actions. And I will keep all this only for you, as I keep my body.

And I also want to tell you that my personal relationship with God is more important to me than anything else in the world. Without Him I need nothing and no one. Forgive me, but if I lose this connection, I will not be able to give you anything good from what I described above. It is not I myself but He who moves me to give you these promises, to accept you as you are, and to love you even before you appeared. It is He who drew me to you, and I loved Him in you. I think you also immediately saw His image in me. I promise you that I will never leave my faith in Jesus and will be faithful to Him and to you in everything, expecting the same from you.

And now I take my Savior into our relationship and ask that He teach us to love each other, no longer only as friends but also as husband and wife. I do not yet know how to love you as my husband, but I will surely learn, for you are given to me for this—to become the training ground for my love.

I wonder what you are really like. Will you be the same as you were during our friendship? May the Lord help us.

I love you.”

Questions for Reflection on This Chapter

1. Please read Song of Solomon 5:10-16; Ruth 1:16-17; John 15:17; 1 Peter 1:22; 1 John 4:7; Galatians 5:22-23; Ephesians 4:15; Philippians 1:9-11; Colossians 3:14; 1 Thessalonians 3:12; 2 Thessalonians 3:5; Revelation 2:19 in light of this topic.
2. What did you understand from this topic?
3. What letter have you imagined for your beloved person?
4. What useful thoughts did you draw for yourself from this lesson?

5. Is it worth writing such letters to an unknown man whom you do not even know?
6. Did the Lord write something similar for us when we did not yet know Him?
7. Do you think such messages bring joy and blessings to those who write and those who read them?
8. What should I do if I already have a family but never received such a letter?
9. Can a promise written to someone inspire me to fulfill it?
10. Is it difficult to love a husband?
11. Does the Lord expect such letters from us for Himself?
12. How is a letter different from a conversation?
13. Have you already learned to love by studying our lessons?
14. What blessings do you have by studying at this School?
15. What do you expect from the following lessons?

Important Decisions

In the pre-wedding bustle, we have to deal with a large number of organizational issues that require much time and resources. Our budget allows us to gather many guests for the wedding celebration, and my friend and I begin to recall all our friends and relatives, making a list to understand how many people we can receive.

We could have gathered only a close circle of our dearest ones and modestly celebrated our union, but out of fear of offending someone, we decided to invite everyone who knows us.

I remember one wedding where the newlyweds received 15 coffee makers as gifts, even though they did not drink coffee. To avoid such situations, we decided to write in the invitations that if, instead of gifts, people gave us money, it would be a significant support for us.

We called everyone we intended to invite, securing their agreement to attend our celebration, and then prepared an invitation card with detailed information about the date, time, and place of our wedding ceremony and banquet.

Shortly before our wedding, we were assigned a time at the civil registry office for our marriage registration. For this event we decided to invite only the closest relatives and friends.

So all the dates are set, tables are ordered, the wedding program is chosen, expenses are calculated, guests are informed, and the responsibilities of the organizers are distributed. And we realize that in all this bustle we have forgotten about each other, and our spiritual life has faded into the background.

We decided to take time to pause and refill our lamps with oil. We gathered together at a large table, prayed over our meeting, and began to discuss our relationship—but now as future husband and wife.

We do not know what awaits us in our union or what trials the Lord may allow. But we decided to talk with each other about

how we will build our family happiness, what principles we will uphold in our relationship, and how we envision our future.

I once again assured my friend of my unwavering love for her, and in return, I heard her tender confession that I was also very dear to her. We decided to take these confessions with us into our family and renew them periodically in the course of our relationship.

We understand that family life is not one continuous holiday but also daily routines, which will also become our reality. And so we already decided to discuss those important things we will need when this reality becomes true. We prayed about this and began to talk.

We resolved to love one another no matter what and, in this love, to compete in bringing joy into our relationship, making it happier. We also set aside time for the spiritual part of our life, when we would be together and when each of us could have personal time with Jesus. We agreed to record all important moments so that later we could reread and implement them.

We also agreed that once a week we would hold a family council to discuss everything concerning our family, our happiness, and our relationship. We chose Wednesday evening for this purpose and decided it would be our sacred family time, when we would turn off all calls and phones, set aside all our tasks, cancel all events and meetings, so that calmly and without haste we could get to know each other, clarify aspects of our relationship, make proposals, share revelations, and talk about what was on our hearts. This would not be a time for tender caresses but for serious discussion of important issues. Although we do not plan to communicate only once a week, we specially dedicated this evening for the two of us, devoting it to us alone, to have in this communion each week an oasis where there would be only she and I.

We cannot foresee how successful our decisions will be, but I think that if we begin to build together something beautiful and strong, we will succeed. What we sow in our relationship, that we will reap in our life.

Knowing the date of our wedding, we determined that before this celebration we would already be able to hold our family council four Wednesdays.

It was also decided that all councils would be held at the table, where we could look into each other's eyes and soberly express what concerns both of us. This is not a time for embraces.

I asked my friend for permission to tell her of my love for her and how the Lord had blessed me in this matter, and she gave her consent and with all her heart immersed herself in my confessions and revelations. I realized that love knows how to express itself not only in deed and truth but also in heartfelt confessions to each other, when you are ready to speak or to listen. And the more I expressed how love worked in my heart, the easier it became for me to find the right words to beautifully and properly convey everything that overwhelmed me. Although I understand that love is given to us from above and must be sought, in this situation it naturally entered my life to pour out through my heart and become part of my chosen one's life. I am not ashamed to love the woman I received as a gift from God. I am delighted with the prospect that I will soon be able to affirm this love already in family life and express it more openly. And the more I speak of how I love, the more the beauty and depth of my love for my dear friend, whom I have chosen to love always, is revealed to me.

Although we had previously confessed love to each other, it was limited only to our friendship. But now we plan to carry our friendship into family life and see how our relationship takes on an entirely new character. We anticipate something beautiful, great, and previously unknown. And such expectation does not torment us but brings joy by its steady approach.

My friend, after hearing my confession, also began to share with me her revelations of love for me. And I sit and experience unearthly joy, because in this world there is a person who sincerely loves me like this and is not afraid to say it, and even does it with special joy. I never imagined before that simple words of love could be so pleasant to my heart. And our future

family gives us a wonderful opportunity to always and at all times speak of this to each other.

Fearing that now, before the wedding, we are so talkative, but later this may disappear from our life, we decided that in the future every morning and every evening before going to sleep we would tell each other of our love and do it from a pure heart.

I understand that daily life may change much in our relationship, but knowing the truth that God constantly loves me just like this, I decide to love my wife in the same way, regardless of how she behaves. May the Lord help me.

I declare this decision to my future wife and see that she really liked it. Oh, only to stand firm! I understand that without Christ I can do nothing and ask Him to confirm me in my decision.

Questions for Reflection on This Chapter

1. Please read Amos 3:3; Matthew 18:18-20; Galatians 5:13; Romans 12:9-10; Ephesians 4:2-3; 5:25; Song of Solomon 8:7; Jeremiah 31:3; John 13:34-35; 1 Peter 1:22; 4:8; 1 John 4:7-8; 1 Corinthians 13:1-8; 16:14; Galatians 5:6; Colossians 3:14 in light of this topic.

2. What did you understand from this topic?

3. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?

4. Did you learn something new and useful?

5. Is it really important to make such decisions before they are necessary?

6. Do you think that if you and your other half decide to build happiness together, you will succeed?

7. Is it important to love one another before marriage and in such a way that it is forever and unconditional, or does love come only in family life?

8. Is it necessary to spend time together discussing personal issues? If so, why?

9. What benefit does making decisions before the future bring, when everything may be different?
10. What should I do if my life lacks everything that this lesson speaks and teaches about? Should I break off the relationship?
11. What if I want to have a beautiful future, build good plans, make right decisions, but my friend (or partner) thinks it is nonsense and suggests not overloading the mind with unnecessary worries?
12. Does Heaven take into account all the decisions we make before creating a family?
13. Why is it necessary to know each other before marriage and also in marriage? Why must time be set aside for this?
14. Should we constantly tell our loved one that we love them, even if they already know it? Would that be abusing trust?
15. Is it necessary at all to say words of love to each other? Or is it more important to prove it constantly by deeds?