

Beloved Teenager (Volume 6)

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The Time Has Come to Love

In the life of every child, there comes a time when hormonal changes laid down by God are activated in their body, which leads to intensive physical growth and noticeable changes in thinking. This time is commonly called the "adolescent period," through which all people pass, but not all of them remember and understand what their parents experienced. But when these former teenagers become parents and live to see the moment when a teenager appears in their family, they sometimes become lost in guessing what is happening with their child, who suddenly transformed into a marvel and is confidently moving in the direction of a monster.

The most popular topic in child rearing is the "adolescent period," which is also the most complex for many parents and the most incomprehensible in practical terms.

I think that the periods of growth and relationships with children can be boldly divided into several stages: from birth to five years you serve the children; from five to ten years they serve you; from ten to fifteen years the time has come to love; from fifteen to twenty the time of friendship has arrived. Although all these qualities of relationships are not tied to time and blend with one another, regardless of the children's age, this is exactly how I named the conscious approach of parents to raising children for God in each period of the child's growth. I think that many problems in relationships arise precisely among those parents who do not understand the peculiarities of each age and do not want to change in their attitude what they consider correct and unquestionable.

Everything that parents managed and were able to invest in the child's heart in the first years of the child's life, everything they taught him, everything that was sown, will bear its fruit in all subsequent years. All those mistakes, ignorance in upbringing and lack of time for children will also make themselves known and manifest themselves accordingly during the transition from childhood to youth.

That influence of good and evil under which your children were in your home managed to form their characters and worldview. If you had no time to tell children about God, then in all subsequent years you will have to tell God about your children and ask for a miracle for them.

God is unique in that He can always, at any stage of growth, in any situation, under any circumstances, correct everything that is beyond human power. He gives every person who decides to establish a relationship with Him a new heart and new thoughts and make of him what will be accepted by Heaven into the Eternal dwellings.

But it would be foolish to hope for God or a miracle of conversion in the future without showing proper attention to children in the present. By allowing the enemy of souls to engage in raising my children through all kinds of sources of information and people not consecrated to God, I risk that their love for the world will overshadow any knowledge of God and their vain way of thinking will overshadow the influence of the Holy Spirit when He draws them to Jesus.

Over the course of 30 years, observing the relationships of children and parents in the church and seeing how many children in adolescence leave for the world forever and never come to God again, one wants to understand why this happens and what is the cause of such apostasy? I do not think that only the children are to blame for this, having free choice, but I am also not going to blame the parents, because even with the best influence, there are unforeseen circumstances from outside that helped the children make the wrong choice.

The family and the accepted relationships of its members to each other lay the main foundation in the character and worldview of the child. But good upbringing without personal relationships with God does not guarantee a righteous life for a young person. He can become a cultured sinner, without harmful habits, with an impeccable reputation and good character. But it is precisely Christ in the heart that is the restraining Force preventing spiritual fall and the choice of other values.

Sin has the power to exert mighty influence on the will and mind of man and there is only one force capable of destroying these binding chains - this is God's grace given by faith in Jesus.

The family is a kind of relay race in which it is necessary not only to run the assigned distance but also to pass the relay baton of faith in Jesus, without which the entire race is considered invalid. Of course, God does not think by worldly criteria and He has a plan for any situation and He can hand the lost baton to the runners just before the finish line, but this should not plunge us into carelessness, thinking that the Lord should somehow save our children by Himself. Without us and our prayers, it is difficult to imagine how and what will happen with our children. God acts through man to save man.

If you do not yet have children or they are still very small, then you have a good chance for a good beginning and avoiding many problems. Raising children for God is a struggle, it is a battle with oneself, it is a war in which there are no weekends and vacations, it is cooperation with Higher spiritual Forces to achieve constant victories, it is a lifelong school for oneself and those whom Heaven has entrusted to you. But victory comes from the Lord. Jesus has already won in this war and only with Him will we also be victors.

We cannot manage to do everything, we will not succeed in passing everything to our children, not all important truths will be revealed to us to the end, but God is able to correct all our shortcomings, misses and mistakes when we go with Him to victory in our life.

We have no right to determine the choice of our children and decide their fate for them, but we can exert influence and support, we can pray for them and we can love them at all times.

The time has come to love your children, to love without any conditions, to love at all times, to love even when it seems impossible, to love despite everything. And to love not blindly, but combining mercy and justice, strictness and indulgence, faith and love.

If I have something to pass on to my children, then the choice always remains with them whether to take what I give them and whether to carry it further. My responsibility is then passed on and placed upon those who were entrusted to me, but I do not cease to be a parent, and the commandment to honor father and mother, given to my offspring, does not lose its power.

For those parents who understand that they missed something, gave too little of something, showed negligence or ignorance in something, there is good news that at the end of time a special message will sound and special influence will be poured out on families. We read Mal 4:5-6: "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse." We believe that everything we do studying family issues and upbringing issues is also a partial fulfillment of this promise and the Lord will certainly fulfill through us what He promised in His word.

The current of this world is very strong and it captures and carries away all who do not resist it. And may your oars never be dry. We read "...Listen to me, you men of Judah and you people of Jerusalem! Have faith in the LORD your God and you will be upheld; have faith in his prophets and you will be successful." 2Chr 20:20.

Questions for Reflection

1. Please read John 3:16; Prov 22:6; 29:17; Eph 6:4; Deut 6:6-7; Isa 1:16-18; 54:13; Rom 12:2; Job 1:5; Luke 15:20; Jer 29:11; 2Tim 1:5 in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What was revealed to you in this chapter?
4. How can parents prepare for the adolescent period of their children?
5. Why is it important to change the approach to upbringing depending on the child's age?
6. How does the atmosphere in the family influence the child's worldview?

7. Why should we not hope only for a miracle of conversion in the future?
8. What does the relay baton symbolize in child rearing? And why is its transmission so important?
9. Why should we not be careless, hoping for God's help and participation without making any effort in child rearing from our side?
10. Why is upbringing cooperation with Higher spiritual forces?
11. Why does God promise to turn the hearts of fathers to children and the hearts of children to their fathers?
12. What do oars symbolize in the spiritual life of the family?
13. Why is it important to combine mercy and justice in love for children?
14. What hope remains for parents who made mistakes in upbringing?

What Will You Choose for Yourselves Now?

It is written in Deut. 11:26: "See, I set before you today a blessing and a curse." This choice concerns many spheres of people's lives and each of us has to choose exactly what we want, and the consequences are the result of our choice.

When parents enter the adolescent period of their child, I would like to ask them what choice of behavior suits them most? Do they desire curses for themselves or do they dream of blessings? I think that not a single family even thinks that their life and relationships with their beloved children could become a curse, both for themselves and for their children.

I remember one mother who shared with my wife, when we had just married, her feelings about her daughter, saying: "While my daughter was small, I loved her madly, but now that she has become a teenager, I hate her and cannot stand to see her!" I listened to such testimony and did not understand where such dislike for one's own child came from? Especially since her daughter was an ordinary young girl who behaved modestly and politely with strangers.

I also remember stories from my peers, when I myself was a teenager, about how they war with their "ancestors." That's what parents were called.

Such testimonies frighten many young and uninformed parents about the coming time of trial and can even program their consciousness for such a war.

But God did not lay elements of curse into the child's development. The growth and changes in young people that begin to occur at a certain time is God's plan for development and personality formation during the transition from parental dependence to independent life. Any child is destined to become an adult and arrange their personal life at their own discretion. Any child must go through puberty and acquire reproductive functions of the organism in order to have the power to produce people like themselves. And if this process is stopped to please unreasonable parents, they will get a disabled

person who will have to be treated comprehensively so that all natural processes return to normal.

The teenager is not at all to blame for becoming an adult. But for him all these processes are new and he has neither experience nor knowledge of how to conduct himself properly, what is happening to him, what will happen next and when it will end. And his behavior at this time is a natural reaction to that unknown into which he entered and in which he continues to go. He very much needs the support of his parents, their understanding and their unconditional love. Although he doesn't speak about it, he very much needs someone who will explain something to him, support and comfort him.

The absence of light and information about the adolescent period, both in children and in parents, the enemy of souls will certainly use in his plans and will try to spoil close relationships for a long time or remove heartfelt warmth and affection from them.

Unfortunately, many parents unwittingly choose precisely this path of curse, both for themselves and for their children. And this is not a conscious choice and, by and large, many fathers and mothers would be horrified if they were told directly what their unreasonable relationships with children and the struggle for authority in the family would lead to.

But the Lord thought everything out very wisely, as something beautiful that brings blessing. His plans include that the transitional age from childhood to youth should become the most beautiful time for forming friendly relationships with one's children. And why fear what should bring joy and be a constant blessing? And if some difficulties arise, they can be understood and such a solution found that will not cause anyone harm and pain. If you add 2 plus 2 together, how many correct answers will we get? One. And how many incorrect answers can there be? Infinitely many. Truth is universal in that it is one and objective, while conjectures that distort it can be very many, and blessed is he who has known the truth and whom it has made free from all lies and deception.

Parents who have approached the time when their child enters the adolescent period need to prepare themselves for necessary changes in relationships with the growing person and independently study this question from reliable sources. It is important to be extremely careful when choosing wise teachers for yourself. If it is neighbor Manya, who authoritatively manages her family and keeps everyone in "iron gloves," then her advice will very quickly destroy your family and bring no benefit. Before you begin to listen to anyone on the question of relationships with a teenager, make sure that this knowledge will lead you to love, happiness and friendship in your family. You are dealing not with a monster that must be defeated, but with your direct relative who needs your unconditional love, unconditional friendship and must receive this from you. And if you offer him something else, this will not be accepted, but thrown in your face with contempt. And true love and wisdom are given only by God.

The blessing of the adolescent period is completely in the power of parents. Choose precisely this path and you will see how beautiful and easy it is, complex and interesting, unique and unusual, simple and mysterious in its design.

Any blessing includes eternal principles: love, happiness and friendliness of your heart. It is precisely with such an attitude toward life and people that you can build many good things, and your teenager is no exception to the rules, but an amazing and not long-lasting experience.

It is worth determining the conditional boundaries of the beginning of this period. The most interesting time begins from the moment when you hear from your child requests to leave him alone or not to interfere with him being alone. This is not what you are used to sometimes hearing when your children are tired, but a conscious statement in a rude form. Let this become a signal for new changes in your consciousness.

Of course, the period of growing up began much earlier, but if you did not notice this, then such statements from your children act soberly. They have become adults, though still small, but already irreversible. And you need to accept this as a fact and

not fight it, but enter this time with prayers and a thirst for new knowledge.

A radical change of thinking and perception of the new personality must occur in the parents' heads, who will now live and act differently than it was until now.

You must not hold childhood in the teenager's life and expect him to return to this beautiful world. He will enter it now only when he gives birth to his own children. Say goodbye to your expectations of that unquestioning obedience that was the norm of life in your house. It will not go anywhere, if the child was raised in this, but it will pass through the fire of critical thinking and will be purified by the power of free choice and making independent decisions.

The time of basic upbringing ended in the childhood phase and those methods of your influence that were accessible to your children will cause indignation and resistance in the teenager's heart. Do not be afraid. The seed of truth sown by you in childhood continues its growth.

Questions for Reflection

1. Please read Josh. 24:15; Prov. 13:1; 14:12; 15:1; Gal. 6:7; Eph. 6:1,4; Isa. 54:13; Rom. 12:10; James 1:5; Col. 3:20, in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What was revealed to you in this chapter?
4. Why does the choice of parents' relationship model play a key role in the child's life during the adolescent period?
5. How does lack of knowledge about adolescence affect family relationships?
6. Why might parents perceive a maturing child as a threat to their authority?
7. Why is the transitional age a blessing and not a curse?
8. Why might parents unwittingly choose the path of curse for their family?
9. Is it important to understand how the teenager's natural reaction to internal changes is expressed?

10. Why can expecting unquestioning obedience destroy relationships?
11. Why does a teenager need support even if he doesn't show it?
12. Why is it so important to maintain an atmosphere of love in the family?
13. How does respect for the teenager's personality affect his behavior?
14. How can adolescence become the most beautiful time for the family?

Peculiarities of Teenager Growth

Parents, from their own experience, may vaguely remember what happened to them at the time when they were transforming from children into teenagers, but when their own children are growing up, often parents do not conduct conversations on the topic of global changes in the growing organism and are not particularly interested in what is happening with their children.

The absence of information can plunge a teenager into depression and all kinds of fears due to misunderstanding of the physiological processes taking place.

A child does not see how he grows and he thinks little about who he is transforming into.

I remember a case when I was talking with children from 6 to 10 years old and telling them that they would not always be children, that they would change and become big and would be adults. And they listened to me with wide eyes and did not understand how this should look in their lives, since growing up was not part of their plans.

God laid a program of growth in every person and whether we want it or not, whether we are ready or not quite, but at the appointed time certain processes begin to occur that change everything in the body.

Parents should not be afraid of the adolescent period, but it is desirable for them to prepare and learn to understand God's plan for this time. Their children grow according to normal laws of anatomy and someday they will grow up and leave their father's house, never to return to it forever. This is how our world is arranged and everyone goes through this.

Many fear the rupture of good relationships with children, and someone even compares this to the rupture of a stretched rubber band, which, when released, flies at tremendous speed in both directions and hurts those who stretched it. Wounds heal, but the memory of the pain caused remains.

But why complicate everything so much and invent problems for yourself and others where there should not be any?

If you decided to study the basics of child rearing when he turned 13 years old, then I think you have missed a lot and will no longer be able to make up for it, even with all your sincere desire. But if you become interested in this science from early childhood and competently apply everything in practice, then it will be pleasant for you to be in the company of your children at any age.

Love and friendship can correct any mistakes and shortcomings at any stage of development, and blessed are those parents who know the time and what needs to be done, they will be like the sons of Issachar from 1Chr 12:32, who came as "...men of understanding, who knew what Israel ought to do..."

The duty of father and mother includes the obligation, starting from 10 years old, to conduct explanatory conversations with son and daughter about the upcoming changes in the child's organism, about what they may feel during this and what painful sensations they may have. Children are very interested to know what awaits them in the future and it will be interesting for them to see their intensive growth when all this comes into their life. All children dream of becoming adults, while adults dream of returning to childhood and compose songs about it. Where does childhood go, to what cities? And where can we find the means to get there?

What happens to the body of a ten-year-old child? Puberty processes are launched in it, which make a youth out of a boy and a girl out of a girl, capable of producing and bearing children.

Girls develop, as a rule, earlier than boys their age and for this reason they are sometimes not interested in having communication with their peers and are more drawn to the society of older children.

Starting from 10 years old in a girl's organism, the hypothalamus activates the production of gonadotropic

hormones, which stimulate the ovaries, which produce the hormone estrogen, responsible for further sexual maturation.

At first, girls begin to grow soft tissues in the area of hips, buttocks and chest, and then the appearance of hair cover under the arms and on the pubic part of the body. These processes create prolonged pain in the chest area and, with misunderstanding of what is happening, may cause fear of an unknown disease.

Determining the transition from girl to young woman is very simple. When her feminine days begin, which at first may be irregular, then she can be congratulated on the transition into the adult life of a teenager, but if she is not informed about this by her mother, then it may seem to her that she will soon die from blood loss, which will plunge her into fear and despondency.

A wise mother, and in her absence a caring father, will find ways to prepare their daughter for this time, explain everything to her and teach her to use personal hygiene products.

During puberty, intensive growth of the entire body and bones also occurs, which ends by 16-17 years. Against the background of all these changes, the girl develops emotional instability, which is expressed in sharp mood swings, in tendency to irritation, in increased resentment, in anxious experiences.

There is increased interest in her new body structure, which causes excessive shyness about her new forms and dissatisfaction about the abundance of fatty pimples on the face and chest.

Boys begin to mature a couple of years later than girls, but their growth occurs faster than in girls. The same hypothalamus and pituitary gland produce gonadotropic hormones, which stimulate the production of testosterone, which is responsible for the sexual maturation of the young man. The enlargement of testicles and sexual organs begins. There is intensive appearance of new hair cover in the pubic area and under the arms, and later in many parts of the body

and on the face, which is not the same for all young people and depends on heredity.

The vocal cords "break" due to growth in the larynx area and the voice transforms from childish to masculine. Enhanced growth of muscle mass in all parts of the body begins.

Boys also experience severe pain in the chest area and in muscles when their bones and soft tissues receive a command from the organism to grow and begin to grow intensively.

Emotionally, young men are more inclined to manifest irritation and aggression in the struggle for their rights and freedoms. Their mood can also change quickly, like weather, and depends very much on success in studies, sports or in the development of physical strength. They also develop a striving for independence, which forms protest against parental authority.

It is difficult to precisely determine the moment of transition from boy to young man, but this can boldly be considered at the age of 12 to 13 years, seeing his intensive growth.

By 18-20 years, the final growth of the male organism is formed and this age is considered completed sexual maturity, after which young people receive the right to create their own family and begin independent life.

Since the main growth process occurs during sleep, teenagers are inclined to sleep longer than the allotted time, and if their bedtime was late, then awakening will not be early either. And if there is no urgent necessity, then their sleep should not be interrupted, but the organism should be given the opportunity to organize awakening at the right time by itself.

All difficulties with teenagers in parents arise most likely from ignorance and unpreparedness for changes in relationships. How very difficult it can be to "change shoes" and find a new approach to children, because so much one wants them to always remain children.

Questions for Reflection

1. Please read Ps. 139:13-14; 144:12; Eccl. 3:1; Gen. 1:27; Isa. 44:2; Jer. 1:5; Col. 3:20; Luke 2:52; 1Cor. 3:11; Prov. 20:29 in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What was revealed to you in this chapter?
4. Why is it important to begin conversations about teenage changes with children in advance?
5. What is the role of parents in preparing a child for adolescence?
6. Why do parents often fear the adolescent age of their children?
7. Is it important to understand how hormonal surges affect teenagers' moods?
8. How do teenagers perceive changes in their body if they are not informed?
9. Why is it important for teenagers to have parental support during this period?
10. Does adolescence affect relationships with parents?
11. Why do teenagers begin to strive for independence at this age?
12. At what age is it better to begin conversations with children about upcoming changes?
13. How do love and friendship in the family help overcome the difficulties of adolescence?
14. Did God allow the peculiarities of the adolescent period to destroy relationships with parents through this?

Teenager in the House

A teenager in the house is your child who confidently parts with childhood and confidently transitions to the next stage of his life called "growing up."

As in life with God, each of us goes through a crisis of faith and enters the "dark night of the soul" in order to reconsider much in our life, leave much behind and become disappointed in something, in order to then rise to a new level of relationships with God. So too in the life of a child, a transition from childhood to adult life is planned.

And if in Christianity my growth can be stopped by me and my unwillingness to move further, then in the matter of growing up there are no such stops. The teenager will grow and change, he will pass through all stages of growing up and experience all personal crises that were laid in him by the Creator and nature. But any crisis can be experienced differently. If one is prepared for it from both sides and knows what needs to be done and what should not be done, then this time will fly by in joy and blessing, and the teenager will burst into adult life with all sails set, knowing where his ship is flying. But one can also crawl into this time with broken hearts, spoiled relationships, wounded souls and a desire for this nightmare to end as quickly as possible.

With the completion of growth, age-related changes also end. The matured person calms down, gains confidence and independence and plans his further life without any emotional difficulties.

The peculiarities of modern teenagers differ greatly from what their parents and grandparents experienced at this age. Modern information technologies have so powerfully crashed into our lives and taken possession of many people's consciousness that it is already difficult to imagine life without множества gadgets. A new term has even appeared - internet addiction. And this must be taken into account by all parents, because in this sphere there are many evil communities that

corrupt good morals, through which spirits of wickedness in heavenly places can gain direct access to human consciousness and destroy life from within the heart.

When I saw footage of tsunami action in some cities, I was surprised at how innocently this water entered the settlement, confidently advanced further and further in the form of a small puddle, and behind it came higher and more powerful streams of dark waters mixed with all kinds of debris. After this, the entire city was flooded and wiped off the face of the earth. But the same wave in the middle of the ocean can look quite calm, not attract attention and have no effect on oncoming ships. The difference between a tsunami and ordinary waves is that its length can reach 100 km or more, and it will not stop before anything until these 100 km of water have passed their appointed path. If a mountain range stands in the path of this wave, then those living on it will not even feel any changes in the sea. Except that the water level will rise higher and then drop to the usual level.

The same can be said about the adolescent period and its associated peculiarities. It can last from 6 to 7 years, demolishing all barriers and prohibitions, destroying relationships and lives, and then long regret what happened. Or it can only raise the level of passions, collide with unshakeable values and, having tested their strength, return to its proper place.

Your teenager is experiencing very difficult changes in body and consciousness. These are new thoughts and feelings mixed with pains and fears, uncertainty and unknown emptiness. These are constant mood swings, desire to have independence from others, closedness and attraction to solitude, constant conflicts with himself and the external world, self-determination and search for those like himself in spirit and interests. But all this is experienced by your child, and he must walk this path himself in order to leave all his childhood in the past and become a new adult person who will take from his childhood everything he was taught, what he believed in and what he learned.

During the adolescent period, many questions arise before the growing child that did not interest him previously: • What is the meaning of life? • Who am I and whose am I? • Where am I going and what awaits me in the future? • What will I become? • What does God expect from me? • What does my faith in God represent?

And to all these questions he desires to receive convincing answers.

Hormonal changes in the young body bring with them new thoughts and feelings. A special attraction and interest in the opposite sex appears, which can become a blessing for creating healthy relationships or a sensual curse that destroys soul and body.

Parents also face many different trials for which they may simply not be prepared. Rudeness and irritation from the child without visible reasons will discourage any father and mother. The teenager's unwillingness to perform assigned household duties and new interests, partial detachment from everything also do not bring happiness to the home. Partial or complete disobedience and open opposition to adult opinion can deprive of peace. Disagreement on many issues and search for new life authorities can upset inexperienced parents, but their love for their child and wisdom from above will suggest how to react correctly to all kinds of trials, what to say and what is not worth it, where one needs to be firm and when it is worth not paying attention to strange behavior.

It is also important for parents to understand that the educational process familiar to them has ended, and now the time has come to love and befriend their growing child. Although the influence of father and mother has not gone anywhere, and they continue to care for their teenager and monitor household order and rules, the approach to education itself must be radically reconsidered and changed.

The teenager needs freedom and at the same time parental care. Although he is becoming big, he still does not know and cannot do much, does not understand all the complexities of

independent life and will not be able to bear this burden alone. But the more he feels love and freedom, the stronger will be his desire to test these boundaries and understand where they end. And love must be strict and have those boundaries that cannot be violated at any age under any conditions.

Of course, each teenager is unique in his own way and may experience his growing up differently than it happens with others. But parents need to understand that all crises and changes of adolescence are part of God's program for spiritual and physical human development. God does not leave His children at any age. He protects them from evil and helps them pass through many trials in the right spirit, teaching obedience and granting special blessings. The prayers of parents, and of the teenager himself, will always have power and find answers in the life of the growing generation.

The teenager has an enormous need for love, acceptance and understanding. He cannot tell about this, but he very much needs it. And if he does not receive this in his family, then he will have to seek it outside the home.

A teenager in the house is that person who needs proper guidance, wise treatment, understanding of his feelings and experiences, love and care. And when he receives this, then he will be ready for much.

Questions for Reflection

1. Please read Eph. 6:1-3; Col. 3:20; Ex. 20:12; Prov. 1:8-9; 4:1-2; 15:5; 20:11; Ps. 119:9; Eccl. 11:9; Isa. 40:30-31; 2Tim. 2:22, in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What was revealed to you in this chapter?
4. What is God's design for adolescence?
5. How can we help a teenager understand God's design for his life?
6. How can parents' prayers influence the inner world of a teenager?
7. Why is it important to befriend a teenager and not just love him?

8. Should parents properly understand what is behind a teenager's irritation and rudeness?
9. How can we teach a teenager to openly talk about his feelings?
10. How can we protect a teenager from internet addiction?
11. How can we teach a teenager to accept himself as God created him?
12. How can we maintain closeness with a teenager during the difficult times of his growing up?
13. Why is it so important to talk with a teenager about the future?
14. How can we teach a teenager to see his life from God's perspective?

Understanding Parental Obligation

Young father and mother who have a child enter a lifelong school of family relationships and learn together with their children everything that each age and each character of the child offers them. The responsibility that Heaven placed on them for raising children does not go away, is not transferred to anyone, but encourages parents to seek new ways, new solutions and make changes in their thinking and approach to upbringing.

In the adolescent period, the influence of father and mother as educators of their child continues to have a certain effect and accomplish in the lives of young people what should take place.

Teaching independence and shifting responsibility from parental shoulders to the child's shoulders is a prolonged process that will take many years, although the very fact of granting freedom can be very quick.

It is important to understand that if a teenager has appeared in your house who has begun to behave differently than before, and sometimes even defiantly, you remain the parents of this growing person, are obliged to control his behavior and at the same time provide him with more freedom in making independent decisions.

The teenager very much needs you, but not in the role of strict gendarmes or permissive observers, but in the role of wise mentors who with their words, influence and personal example will give answers to many important questions. During this period, the parents' task includes getting ahead of the world in providing needed and important information that children are waiting for and will definitely receive.

We read: "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Prov. 22:6). This instruction relates to the transitional age and speaks of a young man, not only of an infant.

The teenager very much needs instruction. Everything that was laid in him in childhood and what he was taught in the early years of life will help him manifest these qualities of soul in adolescence as well. The teenager continues to learn to live, and this learning program becomes more complex and interesting. His mind learns to solve complex problems, and independent life will offer him many difficult questions in which he will need help from outside. In this case, parents are the first mentors. However, they must understand that they are dealing with a maturing person with whom they need to behave differently than with a small child.

Knowing that the adolescent period carries many surprises both for the child and for themselves, parents should begin to conduct confidential conversations with their growing children. It will be very interesting for children to listen about who they will become in the future, how strong and beautiful their body will become, how they will learn to be independent and that someday they will have to leave their father's house and build their life away from their parents. These conversations will never be forgotten, and when these changes come into the children's lives, they will remember everything they heard earlier. And father and mother will always find something to say next time as well.

Many fears and experiences may not even touch children's imagination if they are told in advance about changes in physiology, about new feelings, about new views on life and on people of the opposite sex.

God will certainly give wisdom to those parents who will ask Him for this, in order to invest the best principles and values in their inheritance.

Do not make basic mistakes: excessive control or complete absence of boundaries. Both should exist, but in the right proportions and framework.

No matter how rebellious your teenagers become—they still love you and cannot live without you. Neither school, nor church, nor clubs or some organizations should take the place

of parents or take upon themselves the responsibility for upbringing. Father and mother should be the first and last mentors, controlling what influence their children fall under.

Also, it should become a rule for parents to understand that all kinds of physical punishment are inadmissible in adolescence. And if extreme measures have to be taken, these should be explanatory conversations and deprivation of usual benefits and services. But we will talk about this later.

It is important to understand that turbulent or violent expression of feelings and emotions from the teenager should not deprive parents of the desire to figure out what is more important at the given moment—punishment or helping the child manage his emotions.

Parents need to voice what they do not like, while not accusing the teenager of bad behavior. They are also people who may like or dislike something, and the teenager should take this into account. Any rules established in the house should always be observed. If it is the teenager's turn to perform household duties, then he should not be freed from them, but made to understand that no one else will do this work besides him.

It is important for parents to examine their hearts and understand whether there is pride in them that prevents wise influence and proper reaction to inadequate behavior of the growing person. Rudeness or harshness may seem like the simplest and surest solution to complex problems, but they need to be removed from one's heart. God will help replace this sin with wiser relationships.

It is also important to show trust to the teenager if he justifies it: when he responsibly performs assigned tasks, when he associates with good company, when he openly talks about his experiences and when he shows interest in parental instructions.

Control from parents is also necessary: — if the child begins to hide something; — if he develops bad company; — if he was caught lying; — if he carelessly relates to family rules and violates order.

But this control should be wise and should not deprive the teenager of self-respect.

Also, parents should establish reasonable boundaries in all spheres of life: — in finances: the child should understand that money is a limited resource; — in nutrition: at home it is customary to eat what everyone eats; — in internet use: he should use it at established times and for proper purposes; — in daily routine: everything has its time; — in communication: rudeness and insults are inadmissible in the house; — in independence: he can choose his own clothing but should not skip school or church services.

In the matter of attending worship services, special wisdom is necessary. One should not force a teenager to do what he does not understand or does not want. If he has no friends at church, one should not "buy" his attendance with promises of privileges. We will talk about this later.

The teenager may make mistakes, and it is important to understand with what spirit he does this. Reproaches, scolding, comparison with others, humiliation and insults—all these are inadmissible methods of upbringing. They need to be forever excluded from one's vocabulary and thrown out of the heart.

It is worth remembering that not only our lessons, but also state laws place certain obligations on parents for upbringing and care until a certain age of their children. And your child should belong to your house and be under your influence until he reaches the proper age and begins independent life.

Questions for Reflection

1. Please read Josh. 24:15; Prov. 4:1; 10:1; 15:20; 19:18; 20:7; 23:24; Matt. 7:11; Mark 10:14; James 1:5; 3John 1:4; Deut. 6:6-7, in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What was revealed to you in this chapter?
4. Why does responsibility before Heaven for raising children have limited time?
5. Why does the process of teaching independence take many years?

6. What should be the balance between control and freedom for a teenager?
7. Why is it important to "get ahead of the world" in providing information to teenagers?
8. Why is it important for a child to trust parents as first mentors?
9. Why is it important to tell children in advance about changes in physiology and emotions?
10. Why do teenagers, despite rebelliousness, continue to love parents who care for them?
11. How can parental pride negatively influence the upbringing of teenagers?
12. How can we help a teenager make independent decisions?
13. Should parental responsibility before God become hyper-responsibility?
14. Why are respect and trust between parents and teenagers the foundation of their relationship?

Shifting Responsibility to the Teenager

Parents are those who gave birth. Nannies are those who nursed. Educators are those who educated. Mentors are those who mentored. Teachers are those who taught. And all these people can be father and mother, by the responsibility placed on them by Heaven. But the time comes when parents must place all their responsibility on the shoulders of their growing children and give them absolute freedom.

Shifting responsibility is a prolonged process that should touch all spheres of the teenager's life. It begins with confidential conversations in which father or mother first prepare and then introduce their child to the world of independent life. In some cases, this responsibility can manifest already at an early age, when the child is explained hygiene rules, taught restraint, allowed to choose something, and also when he begins to study and receive homework that he must complete independently.

But in the adolescent period, all types of parental responsibility should be transferred to son and daughter, so that they themselves bear responsibility before Heaven for their decisions and behavior, and also answer for all consequences of their choice and way of life.

The animal world clearly demonstrates this model. Many birds feed their chicks until a certain time, protect them at the cost of their own life, and then push the strengthened teenagers out of the nest so that they themselves begin to fly and obtain food for themselves.

Wise parents prepare their children for independent life in advance and warn them that they will not always live together and depend on their parents. The time will come when, having become adults, it will be necessary for them to leave the parental home forever and build their life independently of father and mother. This is not entirely clear to small children, but they already see certain outlines of that goal that they will someday reach.

Shifting responsibility implies weakening control from parents, which transitions into attentive observation and providing greater freedom of choice and action. At the same time, parents can give wise advice and set the right direction.

When a teenager attends some educational institution, it is necessary to make him understand that he himself must bear responsibility for his grades and behavior. Parents will not solve any problems for him in these areas, talk with teachers and persuade them to be more merciful to their child. The teenager himself must answer for how he studies and how he behaves. However, father and mother can ask son or daughter questions:

- "How do you see this situation?"
- "What do you plan to do next?"
- "What way out do you find?"

A responsible teenager should determine his further attitude toward studies himself. And directing him in the right direction can be done with leading questions, offering several correct solutions from which he can choose the most suitable.

Parental praise for the right choice strengthens the sense of responsibility in the teenager's heart and helps him overcome fears in subsequent decision-making.

Father and mother often tell their children about the time when they themselves were children and teenagers, learned independent life, going through certain trials, difficulties, fears and adventures. Teenagers, seeing the absence of influence and pressure from their grandparents on their parents, learn from the personal example of father and mother that they are dealing with independent and responsible people.

The only responsibility before God that parents will never be able to transfer to anyone in order not to bear it in subsequent life is their love or its absence, their personal example and their influence toward good or evil.

When I teach my daughter to think herself about preparing food and choose for herself what is tasty and useful, then, having made sure that she learned this, I can not think about what to feed her, but know that she herself will solve this problem. And if she is lazy to do this, then several missed meals will quickly

bring to her consciousness the thought that now she herself is responsible for her nourishment. Of course, I do not mean times of hunger when no one around has any food.

Following order in the house, it is very useful to have a daily schedule list. But, shifting responsibility to the teenager, I ask him to compose the schedule himself: when and what he should do. He should determine himself when to get up and go to bed, when to do homework and exercises, and my power includes maintaining his choice within the framework of our household order. For example, my daughter should cook dinner for the whole family twice a week and decide herself what to make and at what time, but so as not to poison us with an exotic combination of who knows what. And her refusal of this duty deprives us of a common dinner and we all together bear these consequences.

The financial side of shifting responsibility has special significance in older adolescent age. But the teenager should be led to this gradually, teaching him that the pocket money he receives for personal expenses is limited and has the property of running out. Children quickly learn this when they begin to manage personal funds. In this sphere, they need to be given many explanations, advice and examples, leading them to learn to earn themselves, in addition to what they receive from parents. If the son spent everything at once—this is his right. But this does not mean that he will immediately receive more. Let the consequences of his choice and mistakes in handling money fall on his shoulders and become his concern.

The teenager can choose his own clothing, but he should also wash it himself, iron it, put it in its proper place and monitor its neatness. Let this become his direct duty, which should not be removed from him. Of course, many things cost much more than the teenager can afford, and parents need to determine what is necessary and what relates to the desire to "be like everyone else." If their son wants to acquire something for which there is no urgent need, let him save for it himself and buy it under his own responsibility.

When choosing this or that life direction or making important decisions, compiling a "pros and cons" table is very helpful. In it, wise parents can clearly show the teenager what advantages await him when choosing this path and what problems may arise. When the young mind learns to analyze and draw conclusions before making a decision, it is easier for him to see the dangers and advantages of a given question. And knowing what he will have to face, he will more easily take responsibility upon himself.

Allow children to make mistakes and answer for their blunders themselves. But at the same time ask them leading questions with the help of which they can find the right way out and solution themselves.

If they have conflicts with teachers or friends, let them resolve these questions without your interference, but with your moral support if they need it.

Heaven does not deprive parents of the right to pray for their children, and blessed are those teenagers for whom parents pray.

Questions for Reflection

1. Please read Gal. 6:5; Col. 3:21; Rom. 12:10; 14:12; 2Cor. 5:10; Prov. 3:1-2; 9:9; 20:11; 2Tim. 2:15; Luke 24:48; Eccl. 11:9, in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What was revealed to you in this chapter?
4. What does "shifting responsibility" to the teenager mean?
5. Why should parents weaken control as the child grows up?
6. How can one explain to a child that he should answer for his actions himself and bear the consequences of his choice himself?
7. Would it be right to accustom the teenager to making decisions and planning his life himself?
8. How should parents react if the teenager refuses to fulfill his duties?
9. Why should the teenager answer for his grades and behavior at school himself?

10. How to guide the teenager in learning without taking responsibility upon oneself?
11. How to teach the teenager to analyze his actions with the help of a "pros and cons" table?
12. What decisions should the teenager make independently, and which ones with parental help?
13. How should parents react if the teenager makes serious mistakes while trying to solve something on his own?
14. Should parents interfere in the teenager's disputes with friends?

Independence

The striving for freedom, independence, self-reliance and responsibility is initially embedded in human nature. This striving loudly declares itself from the earliest age, when a toddler wants to do something himself and purposefully moves toward this goal. As the child grows, parents give him the opportunity to be independent in some matters and teach him proper manners: to hold a spoon and eat from it, to dress himself and lace up shoes, to wash hands, brush teeth and wash his face. Each year these tasks become more numerous, and their independent completion is considered normal.

Independence is a unique human ability to make decisions oneself, act independently of others, have one's own opinion, take responsibility for one's actions, control one's feelings and thoughts, and also build boundaries in relationships with other people. The development of independence begins in early childhood and lasts a lifetime. In adolescence, this process goes through its most active and decisive stage, which can be called: "Therefore shall a son leave his father and his mother" (see Gen. 2:24). After this, a person can be considered independent, although he continues to learn this.

Independence touches many aspects of the teenager's life, and he does not always know what and how to do correctly. However, through trial and error, he acquires necessary experience and gains independence from others.

But it is worth remembering that true freedom is based on absolute dependence on God and obedience to His will, which is clearly expressed in His Word. True freedom implies conscious obedience to God and His law. These principles are important to instill in a child from early childhood and constantly remind him of them while he lives with you in the same house, showing by personal example how this looks in the lives of parents.

Some circumstances can accelerate the process of growing up and developing independence: illness or death of parents, difficult economic situation, war, natural disasters, poverty,

conscious choice of independence and purposeful upbringing in this area.

Being independent does not mean complete loneliness, refusal of outside help and complete independence from others. It means that a person has his own opinion, which may coincide with the opinion of those around him, and boldly acts in accordance with his convictions, even if not everyone acts this way. He accepts help from others if it is rational and can ease his efforts.

Independence manifests itself in different spheres of life: • Life independence — the ability to serve oneself and one's natural needs without outside help (for example, preparing food, choosing clothing, cleaning one's room and maintaining order in it). • Social independence — the ability to communicate with people, having one's own opinion and life position, the ability to build proper boundaries and respect the choice of others. • Financial independence — the ability to earn money through one's own labor and wisely manage available funds. • Spiritual independence — firm life principles based on God's will and the ability to live by them despite the opinion of those around. • Emotional independence — the ability to control one's thoughts and feelings, understand the nature of conflicts and keep the lower forces of the soul under the control of reason, consciousness and will. • Intellectual independence — independent learning, choosing pure sources of information, the ability to think critically and analytically and find answers through logical means.

One way or another, any teenager will master this science and transition from childhood to adult life. When you meet an unfamiliar young person of about twenty years old and have common business with him, you would probably be surprised if to every proposal of yours he refers to his parents' opinion and worries whether they will forbid him to do something. We expect that by this age a person becomes independent and can decide for himself how to live. This is the norm of life in any country. Even state laws define 18 years as the age of majority, after which a citizen is fully responsible for himself, and his

parents no longer bear responsibility for his behavior and actions.

Your son or daughter may live separately from you, but this does not yet mean that they have become independent and self-reliant. Also, they may live with you in the same house, but at the same time be independent and not need your participation in their life.

The level of a teenager's independence can be determined by the following factors: • The ability to make decisions based on one's own opinion and personal analytical conclusions. • The ability to answer for one's actions and mistakes without shifting blame to others. • The ability to organize one's day, plan affairs and achieve set goals. • The ability to cope with difficulties and bear the consequences of wrong choices. • The ability to save and spend money, and later — to earn using one's professional and intellectual skills. • Choosing a profession and work according to one's inclinations and interests. • The ability to work without praise and approval from others, evaluating one's actions independently of others' opinions. • Readiness to follow one's convictions even if others laugh at him.

Independence forms confidence in the teenager and raises his self-esteem. It gives him strength and decisiveness in making important decisions, teaches him to listen to wise advice but not depend on others' opinions.

Independence implies freedom of choice but is not freedom itself. For example, if a teenager can freely go out on the street but does not know how to navigate the area, does not observe traffic rules and has no sense of time, such "freedom" can cost him dearly. Or if he receives a large sum of money and complete freedom to spend it, but has no wisdom and does not know the value of money, then despite his "freedom," he will quickly be left with nothing and even get into debt.

If a teenager decided that he can live separately but at the same time comes to eat and wash clothes at his parents', asks them for money for living and their car for his trips, then such "freedom" has nothing in common with independence.

A person who for the sake of personal freedom decided not to work anywhere and not have income will soon understand that such freedom does not make him independent from the world and its goods.

Social networks and internet technologies create an illusion of freedom but make the teenager dependent on others' evaluations and others' opinions, offering what sometimes contradicts common sense.

Freedom is the possibility to choose without pressure from outside. Independence is the ability to bear responsibility for one's free choice. True adulthood comes when the teenager combines both qualities: he is free but acts wisely and consciously.

Parents can contribute to developing independence in the child and accelerate his growing up through purposeful upbringing and teaching in this sphere of life.

Questions for Reflection

1. Please read John 8:36; Prov. 3:5-6; 12:11; 25:28; 29:25; Jer. 17:7; Gen. 2:24; 1Cor. 6:12; 13:11; Eph. 4:14-15; Deut. 30:19; Josh. 1:9; Heb. 5:14, in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What was revealed to you in this chapter?
4. How did Jesus manifest independence in His ministry while remaining dependent on the Father?
5. What fears prevent teenagers from taking on more responsibility?
6. What distinguishes true independence from the illusion of independence?
7. How does the verse Genesis 2:24 ("leave father and mother") relate to the idea of growing up?
8. Why is true freedom, according to the Bible, possible only in dependence on God (John 8:36)?
9. How can parents help a child develop independence without suppressing his initiative?
10. What parental mistakes can slow down the process of developing independence in a teenager?

11. Why does "living separately from parents" not always equal true independence?
12. How do prayer and Scripture study help in making wise choices?
13. Why can independence without spiritual guidelines lead to destruction?
14. How can we distinguish healthy independence from proud stubbornness?

Foundations of Independence

When creating the first people, the Lord created perfect personalities possessing wisdom, independence, self-reliance and freedom. Adam and his wife had the necessary knowledge; they did not need to go through survival school in the new world. They were the richest people to whom belonged the entire planet with all animals, plants and minerals. They also did not need to worry about preparing food—everything necessary grew around them in abundance.

The first people were perfect teenagers who had the necessary fullness of perfection for independent life, but also the perspective embedded in their nature for development and further learning. God Himself came to them in the cool of the day and had relationships with them in which they learned new truths and discovered new mysteries.

But it was different with their children. Cain and Abel were born as all children are born and went through the path of childhood, adolescence and youth, learning everything that an ordinary child learns. I think that the process of their intellectual development differed from the development of our children, but in its sequence and principles it was the same.

Adam and his wife were given unlimited power, but boundaries were also established that were forbidden to violate under penalty of death. The first people were to work in the garden of paradise, keep it and cultivate it. When Adam was completely alone, before receiving a life companion, he had to understand that she was very necessary to him, and so much so that the entire existing world around him lost its attractiveness for the sake of the one who was not yet with him, but who was already in God's plans as a helper, opposite to Adam but corresponding to him and his needs.

Adam possessed enormous intellect, observation and imagination. The first lessons in educating his independence were given to him when determining names for every living creature that populated the earth at that time. He had to give a

name to each creature according to its appearance and habits, remember it, and then tell this name to his wife.

Observing the life and habits of animals, Adam noticed that they were created in pairs, in which there was correspondence of one species to each other, but there was a difference in reproductive organs. The first man sought someone among them corresponding to himself in appearance and intellect, but did not find anyone. His independence could not solve the problem of his loneliness, and God's intervention was required, Who consciously led man to this need in order to give him a wife not simply for entertainment, but when man realized that he was alone and the entire world could not fill his need for communication with someone equal to himself.

God could have created same-sex people and populated the entire earth with them so they would live in joy and happiness, like angels. But He had another plan. He created such a creation that could produce beings like itself and gave the first commandment that they should be fruitful, multiply and fill the earth.

From this narrative about the first people, we see that it is the basic foundation for building family relationships and values that need to be revealed to the teenager and instilled in him before hormones begin to influence his mind and feelings. Common sense and basic knowledge should get ahead of all other processes of the teenager's development. He should know and understand that he is growing in order to become adult and independent, after which he receives the right and wisdom to create his own family, to arrange personal life independently of parents, to take full responsibility for his choice.

From Adam's example we see that before receiving a wife, he received work, was intellectually literate and was ready to give up the entire world for the sake of that one whom he did not yet know. These factors made man ready to accept God's plan, which he possibly did not even imagine, although he possibly had already heard that there should be two of them.

A similar foundation will help young men understand their readiness for independent life, and young women determine how much their chosen one corresponds to the image of a responsible person according to God's plan. This understanding will help young people not to rush events and see the goal and correspondence of themselves and their partner despite their feelings.

Teaching independence begins from the very moment when the child's umbilical cord is cut and he is placed in his mother's arms. And each subsequent year adds certain additions to the development of an independent personality. And the adolescent period brings parents to that moment when they must cut the "spiritual umbilical cord" for the second time, place all their responsibility on their children and give them absolute freedom in everything, being ready to provide help and give wise advice if this is needed in the first stages of independent life.

In teaching independence there should be no "crutches" of parental overprotection. Son or daughter should understand that they are useful and needed members of their family who make their possible contribution to the common family good and are irreplaceable members of this society. Their small labor is just as needed, important and valuable as mother's care and father's industriousness.

When responsibility is placed on a child, this teaches him to make decisions about fulfilling assigned tasks. Teaching independence should touch all spheres of the child's and teenager's life—both physical and spiritual. He should learn himself to control his feelings, emotions, finances, time and strength. Parents' trust, instruction, help and support in this sphere are very needed and always relevant.

A comprehensive process of teaching and educating activity in both spiritual and physical spheres teaches the child to be disciplined, busy and have interest in learning new knowledge and comprehensive development. At the same time, any activity should have measure and not overload the young creature with excessive burdens.

If your children are taught some independent actions, then you should not remove this responsibility from them and not let them perform these duties. Even if their work will take more time, let it be so. Do not interfere with them affirming themselves in these matters.

Shifting responsibility and teaching independence begins with ordinary conversations in which parents share their knowledge, suggestions and solutions, and then announce that their children should do this or that. After which the announced activity is placed on children's shoulders, so as never to remove this duty from them.

For example: If a child began to eat independently with a spoon, then it would be foolish to do this instead of him. When he learned to dress independently, you can correct him in some cases, but not interfere with him doing this.

The teenager should first hear what he will be taught, and then feel on his shoulders all responsibility for new skills and duties. True independence is not simply the ability to live without parents, but the ability to make decisions before God in accordance with His will, independently of other people and follow this course.

Questions for Reflection

1. Please read Gen. 1:26-28; 2:15-20; 2Tim. 3:16-17; Prov. 1:8-9; Phil. 2:12-14; Gal. 6:5; Luke 16:10; Eccl. 9:10; Rom. 12:2; Matt. 6:33, in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What was revealed to you in this chapter?
4. What qualities did the first people possess in order to be independent?
5. Why did Adam and Eve's independence include established boundaries?
6. How does the lesson from Adam's life help build correct family values before creating a family?
7. What does it mean that "common sense should get ahead of other development processes"?

8. How does involving children in family duties develop their sense of usefulness?
9. Why should independence cover all spheres of life?
10. Why is it important not to remove duties from a child after they master them?
11. Why is the ability to make decisions important for true independence?
12. What conversations with children help lay foundations of responsibility?
13. Is it important for parents to study the peculiarities of the adolescent period before it begins?
14. Why should a teenager feel responsibility for his actions?

Teaching Independence

The teenager's transition from childhood to independence is not a matter of one day and not a solution to one question. This is a process that begins from the moment of birth and continues until coming of age. Coming of age is considered to occur at 18 years because by this age a person acquires many practical skills and is capable of bearing responsibility for his life.

Whether parents do something for their child to grow up correctly, or allow him to somehow find himself in this world on his own, he will still grow up and become independent. But with what quality and spirit—this depends on the dominating influence under which his growing up will take place.

In large cities there are many temptations and enticements that create difficulties for God-fearing parents. However, if they cannot move closer to nature, then the Lord will give them strength and wisdom on how to act correctly in these conditions. Rural areas, though more favorable for forming good habits, will not bring much benefit if parents do not fight for their children's future, not investing efforts in forming their characters according to God's plan, but allow the world to exert its influence leading to the soul's destruction.

The enemy of souls does not sleep. While he is still alive, he tirelessly seeks opportunities to steal, kill and destroy. It is foolish to count on his mercy if nothing is undertaken to destroy his pernicious influence. When fruit on a tree is not yet ripe, the owners do not worry too much about its preservation. But when the time of ripening comes, many appear who wish to steal or spoil this fresh fruit: insects, birds, passersby look at it with lust and, in the absence of proper protection and control, are ready to steal or damage it.

So too in a child's life there is a time when puberty begins, and he becomes a desirable object for spirits of wickedness in heavenly places striving to cause irreparable harm to the growing organism.

The very first thing in the process of teaching independence is providing the teenager freedom to do what he can already do himself, but at the same time placing responsibility on him for his behavior and its consequences. For example, when a toddler is taught to use the potty independently but he doesn't want to learn this, then wet pants create certain discomfort for him. This way he learns to compare the charm of dry clothing with the inconvenience of wet clothing.

And further—more interesting. First steps develop coordination of the vestibular apparatus and teach the child not to fall. The first trip to the store helps understand the value of money and the joy of purchase. First school assignments instill diligence in their completion.

In the transitional age, despite active growth, the teenager remains a child in many ways, but not forever. Girls develop emotionally faster than boys, and parents should take this peculiarity into account, especially if the family has children of both sexes.

It is important to teach the teenager to make decisions himself and bear responsibility for them. For example, he should decide himself what to wear, how to spend pocket money, what profession to choose, independently take care of collecting and submitting necessary documents, when to do homework and then answer to teachers himself for not completing it.

Mistakes in many situations are inevitable, but they are precisely the best teachers. They encourage young people to think and analyze their actions and their consequences.

The ability to plan one's life and time also enters into teaching independence. The teenager should learn to set short-term and long-term goals and achieve them independently. At the same time, he should be able to plan, prepare for fulfilling what is planned, gather necessary information, consider possible expenses and analyze the result obtained.

For example, if he decided to master a musical instrument, he should find information on this question himself, make a

schedule of lessons and understand how much he really needs this.

Do not be afraid to assign the teenager important tasks that he has not performed before. He should feel himself needed in solving the family's daily questions and not be afraid to take on responsible projects for the common family good.

Preparing food for himself should also enter the list of the teenager's natural duties. He can learn this himself, but parents need to give him appropriate knowledge about what is useful and what cannot be eaten. This question should be considered in early childhood and become a norm of life in the adolescent period.

Parents sometimes have to leave children alone at home, and this is not easy, especially if the children are still small. However, the teenager needs personal space and time to be alone. In such moments he is more open to learning independence, as he can analyze his life and plan the future without direct control from parents.

Conversations about the future help the teenager realize that he is growing up. Talks about the fact that at a certain moment he will have to leave his father's house prepare him for this inevitable move.

Father and mother should learn to formulate correct questions that make the teenager think about his behavior, evaluate the consequences of his actions and draw conclusions from mistakes. It is also important to discuss his feelings and experiences without violating his freedom to answer or not answer. Sometimes it is useful to tell what the parents themselves felt at this age, how they coped with the flow of thoughts and circumstances, what mistakes they made and what lessons they learned.

Financial literacy also plays an important role in becoming independent. The teenager needs more money than a small child, as he has new needs and desires. Parents should teach him how to earn money independently and manage it wisely.

Do not solve all the teenager's problems for him—let him face the consequences of his decisions himself and learn to overcome them. Your wise questions will help him analyze the situation and draw conclusions for the future. If he continues to step on the same "rakes," try not to subject yourself together with him to these blows of fate. Your personal example, your influence and your experience should suggest to him how to correctly solve life questions and decide independently.

It is very important to develop critical thinking in the teenager and teach him to trust only God. Leading questions help look at any information from different sides and draw conclusions about how honest and useful it is.

Critical thinking is a person's ability to subject everything to doubt except God's word, but at the same time control his doubt and conduct deep analysis of received data. Let the teenager learn to test everything before making it his conviction and accepting it at "face value."

If your son or daughter prefer to trust not you but the other parent more, then do not be jealous about this and allow him to receive necessary advice and wise instructions from your other half.

Questions for Reflection

1. Please read 1Thess. 5:21; Col. 2:8; 1Tim. 4:12; 2Tim. 2:15; Ps. 119:9; Matt. 6:33; Prov. 1:1-8; 6:6-8; 10:4; 15:5; 23:26; Jer. 29:11; 1Cor. 3:11, in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What was revealed to you in this chapter?
4. Why does independence not come in one moment but is formed gradually?
5. How does environment (city or countryside) influence the formation of a teenager's character?
6. What temptations and enticements prevent a teenager from becoming truly independent?
7. How can parents find balance between control and trust in educating independence?

8. Why is it important to give the teenager the right to make mistakes?
9. How can we teach a teenager to bear the consequences of his decisions?
10. What mistakes do parents make when they try to protect a child from any difficulties?
11. Why is it important for a teenager to be able to prepare at least simple dishes?
12. What independent tasks can be assigned to a teenager to prepare him for adult life?
13. Why is it important for a teenager to have personal space for reflection and planning the future?
14. What questions can parents ask a teenager to help him more deeply realize his actions and what is happening to him?

Right Questions

In the process of raising children, parents become accustomed to instruction and teaching, to control and command, which helps the growing generation go through life on the right course and not make serious mistakes choosing what whose consequences are unknown to you.

But parents should consider that correctly posed questions are an important part of upbringing, and when the adolescent period comes, they become a necessary process that has proper influence and teaches much.

For a teenager to become independent, responsible and able to make important decisions, wise questions need to be asked to him:

- which will encourage him to reflection and deeper analysis of what is happening to him;
- which will help him develop in the right direction and develop personal responsibility;
- which will motivate the search for correct independent solutions, rather than waiting for instructions;
- which help understand and realize one's feelings, manage them, and also understand others' feelings.

Parents' questions should not contain humiliation, pressure, insults, accusations, manipulations, ready answers, comparisons with others, reminders of past mistakes, rhetorical questions, building up fear and pity, abstraction or complexity. They should not be asked as a result of anger or under the influence of bad mood. Remember that the spirit and intonation with which a question is pronounced can completely change the meaning of even the most correct question.

It is necessary to feel the time and place to ask the teenager about something. When he is tired or irritated by something, he may consider your desire to help him understand his feelings as pestering and violation of his personal space.

Also, questions should not be asked that the teenager himself cannot solve and this will reveal to him his helplessness and weakness. These may be questions about politics, economics or about another person's choice. When asking any question, father or mother need to understand whether their teenager has any answer and how much this will help develop independence.

When your questions are correctly formulated and asked at the right time, in a spirit of love and friendliness, then your young people will feel confident and happy, will learn to analyze their actions and desires and will begin to make correct decisions.

During the time when a teenager makes a mistake or is seriously mistaken about something, a correctly asked question will help him realize the true state of things and encourage making the right conclusion and seeking the needed way out.

When our forefathers sinned, the Lord decided to convict them with the help of questions, as a result of which the depth of their fall was revealed.

When Job and his friends philosophized about what they did not fully understand, the Lord directed their thoughts in the right direction with correct questions.

In the four Gospels we read that Jesus often answered others' questions with his own questions, encouraging his opponents to accuse themselves and give correct answers.

The method of influencing a situation by asking wise and correct questions is not something new, but it is very effective because it does not violate others' boundaries, respects everyone's choice, offers something better and teaches responsibility and independence.

When a teenager hears an interesting question and willingly answers it, then hears another question and finds the correct answer and continues to build communication in this spirit, this is not simply a quiz, but formation in him of self-confidence, understanding of his significance, improvement of trust in relationships. When he was able to give correct answers to all

your questions worthily and independently, he feels like a winner and an excellent student, which raises his self-esteem and brings you closer.

It will not be superfluous to sometimes praise the teenager for his correct answers, admire him and pay him compliments, but without flattery and excessive jubilation. And sometimes your thoughtful appearance can show him that he taught you something, which will give him additional joy after communicating with you.

When your children feel themselves in equal relationships with you and respectful treatment of themselves, then it is easy to find common language with them and you are an indisputable authority for them. Your love and friendship only strengthens their trust and it will not be difficult for them to share their secrets and experiences when they see in you a friend wanting to help them and serve.

Parents do not need to hurry the teenager with an answer, but give him time to think. Sometimes this may take several days. Also, communication should not be turned into an interrogation, as a maturing person may feel like a suspect and close himself off. If you do not receive expected answers, then perhaps now is not the most suitable time for your questions. Questions should not devalue your interlocutor's feelings or emotions.

There is also such a method of conveying needed information to the teenager's consciousness without violating his boundaries—this is indirect instruction without direct dialogue. For example, parents want to teach their stubborn son something, but he does not want to listen to them. Then the spouses agree with each other to discuss the solution to his problem in personal communication when their son will hear them but not participate in their conversation. Parents begin to ask correct questions and give correct answers in a spirit of love and respect. This has its influence and does not violate anyone's boundaries. And the information heard can become a good seed when making independent decisions. But it is worth remembering that the maturing son knows how to understand

your true motives and will very quickly see the trick in your communication if you do not show special wisdom and tact.

If your questions cause indignation or irritation, then do not continue such a conversation. It will not be superfluous to apologize if you behaved incorrectly toward the teenager and hurt his feelings with your questions.

If you ask: "Aren't you tired of sitting on your phone all day?", then this is unlikely to cause a feeling of joy in the teenager. But if you ask the question like this: "Share what new thing you found today in internet space?", then it is possible that he will tell you something that you could discuss together.

By their nature, questions for communication should not imply only two answer options, but should arouse lively interest and launch the thought process.

Your questions should develop the growing person's personality, help him take responsibility through his answers, make important decisions and seek independent answers to his life questions. If the teenager sees in you a wise mentor and friend, then he himself will seek communication with you and listen to what you say. But you need to respect his boundaries and his personal opinion and give him the right to make mistakes, but so that he understands that you do not condemn him but are always ready to help and support.

It is important for spouses to learn from each other in asking correct questions, discussing what sounds right and what does not, before going to the teenager with this. Understanding the influence of words and how another person hears you, you can skillfully wield this tool of upbringing and have success in this.

Questions for Reflection

1. Please read Prov. 4:7; 15:1; 16:4; 17:27; 18:3; 25:11; 27:17; 29:15; 31:26; 1Cor. 13:11; Eph. 4:29; Col. 3:21; James 1:19; Rom. 12:2 in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What was revealed to you in this chapter?

4. How can questions influence the formation of a teenager's personality?
5. Why did Jesus often answer others' questions with his own questions?
6. What mistakes should be avoided when formulating questions to a teenager?
7. Why is it important to consider spirit and intonation when asking questions?
8. Why is it important to choose the appropriate time for questions?
9. What should you do if a teenager perceives your questions as intrusion?
10. What questions can help a teenager learn to make independent decisions?
11. How, through questions, is a teenager's personal self-esteem raised?
12. How can questions direct a teenager to search for a way out of a difficult situation?
13. How does parents' discussion of their questions help achieve success in upbringing?
14. Did you notice that the teaching in this School is built on questions and answers?

How to Ask Questions to a Teenager?

When communicating with a teenager, it is important to consider his age, receptivity, mood, disposition for conversation and his openness for discussion.

Parents and teachers should note for themselves that teenagers are no longer small children, but maturing young people who want to be treated seriously, respectfully, tactfully, friendly and with love. The more of this is present in your speech, the more chances you have to build strong relationships and convey to their consciousness what lies on your heart.

An ordinary question: "How are things?" may remain unanswered because it sounds formal or like an attempt at control. But it is better to ask like this: "What was interesting for you today?" or "Was there anything surprising in your life today?"

If a teenager is not in the mood, then it is better not to ask him direct questions and not begin important conversations, as with his sharp answer he may close himself off for future conversations as well.

Not all conversations should be serious, as this may cause an association with searching for problems. But communication should also be filled with your cheerfulness, be light and without moralizing.

If a teenager does not want to answer, then you should not pressure him, accuse or intimidate, but you can ask: "Will you have time today to discuss some questions?" By this you show respect for his choice and take his decision into account.

There are everyday questions that may remain unanswered but help quickly make contact and create a cheerful atmosphere: "What is your favorite song right now?" "What surprises you most?" "What is the funniest thing that happened to you today?"

To get to know the teenager better, you can ask such questions: "What is your most cherished dream?" "What do you think you will be in 15 years?" "And if you received a million, what would

you spend it on?" "How would you act if you found a large sum of cash money?"

And it is very important to listen carefully to the answers, as such questions reveal heart intentions.

To make the teenager think, you can ask him: "What do you think, who is a true friend and what makes him true?" "At what age is it best to create one's own family?" "Is it difficult to love one's enemy? And who is an enemy in your opinion?" "What is good and how is it manifested?"

It is important to pose questions so that they do not humiliate the teenager and do not create discomfort in him. It is unacceptable to compare him with a small child, focus attention on peculiar appearance or hint at his stupidity. Though this may be present in him, let him learn about this from the mirror or from his peers. But if you ask like this: "What do you think, what clothing or hairstyle would better emphasize your femininity or masculinity?" then you can learn many interesting things.

You cannot pronounce questions that program for failure: "Why are you so lazy?" "When will you stop being stupid?" "And when will you learn to do everything right?"

But it is better to pose the question like this: "Do you want me to help you?" or "Will you let me know if I am needed?"

Do not build your questions so that after the teenager's answer you give your correct answer and do not judge him if he is sincerely trying to tell you something. But if you disagree with his train of thought, then you can ask directing questions: "What do you think, and if you acted like this, would this be better?" "And won't you have problems with friends?"

If your teenager commits obvious sin and speaks directly about it, then here it is necessary to have wisdom from above to convey to his consciousness that the sin being committed is very dangerous because it is so written and leads the soul to death, and you do not like such behavior. But do not try to fit teenage mistakes and his desire to be independent into the

concept of sin. If he shows disobedience due to poor health or mood, or wrong choice, then you should not accuse him of violating the fifth commandment. Without necessity do not beat him with Biblical quotes, but be very careful in pronouncing spiritual truths.

And if you really want the Lord to convict your teenager, then choose the necessary chapter for the next family worship and ask your maturing child to read it for everyone, without adding your own comments to what was read. The trust and understanding that was built in childhood will not go away in the youth years either.

Such a question: "Do you read the Bible? Or do you only sit on your phone?" should not sound in your house. But you can ask: "What Biblical verse do you like most or fits the current situation?" "What do you think, did I make mistakes at your age?"

Pressure on conscience can cause the opposite reaction and lead to undesirable consequences: "You didn't pray again today? Aren't you afraid for your safety?" "Why don't you want to go to church? Do you want to become a pagan?" "Are you perhaps sinning?"

And with tactful questions you can awaken interest in deeper Bible study: "What do you think, how old was David when he defeated Goliath? I think he was your age?" "It seems to me that when Joseph was sold into slavery, he was your peer? How would you feel in his place?"

You will not receive proper answers to all your questions, but if they are correct, respectful and wise, then, possibly remaining unanswered, they will make the teenager think about important things.

When he makes a mistake and understands that something is wrong, then instead of condemnation you can suggest he draw a conclusion and find out how he intends to act in the future or what steps should be taken to avoid mistakes next time?

Study what interests your teenager most, what he fills his inner world with and use this knowledge to speak in a language understandable to him. If he is inclined to watch suspicious films, then discuss with him the behavior of main characters and with your questions let him understand what spirit guides them, so that he himself comes to this conclusion.

If he collects something, then participate in this hobby, gather more information and find something special and suitable for his collection.

Sometimes remember your youth years and what you liked and what you did not, what fascinated you and what was temporary.

There are questions that arouse lively interest, form self-respect, bring joy and do not expect a correct answer: "What superpower would you like to possess?" "And what would you do if you became president of the country?" "And what would you do if you learned to fly?" "What wild animal would you like to befriend?"

For deep reflection you can also ask this: "Do you think friendship between a guy and a girl is possible?" "What is more important: to create a family or to preserve it?" "What should a friend not be like?" "What is most valuable in friendship?"

And remember that the character of an independent and responsible person is being formed in your house, and all your questions and instructions should be respectful and appropriate. And let everything you do be with love.

Questions for Reflection

1. Please read Matt. 7:12; Eph. 6:4; Col. 4:6; Gal. 5:22-23; Prov. 12:25; 16:24; 18:13; 22:6; Phil. 2:3; Ps. 78:4; 2Tim. 2:24; Rom. 12:10, in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What was revealed to you in this chapter?
4. Why is it sometimes better to ask a teenager questions than to give moralizing?
5. What questions, in your opinion, inspire more trust in teenagers, and why?

6. Why is a tactful approach important when asking questions to a teenager?
7. How can you distinguish a teenager's disobedience from his desire to be independent?
8. What questions are better to avoid so as not to cause feelings of anger, guilt or discomfort in the teenager?
9. What questions about his dreams or plans can reveal the teenager's inner world?
10. What examples of biblical principles can be used to build trusting communication?
11. What helps avoid condemnation in conversation with a teenager, even if you disagree with him?
12. What questions can help a teenager better understand his own thoughts and desires?
13. Why is it important to address the teenager as an equal, as a maturing person?
14. Why is it sometimes useful to remember and tell your own experience from the teenage period?

The World of Teenager's Emotions

During the period of hormonal activity and intensive body growth, a teenager experiences many feelings and sensations unfamiliar to him. From ignorance and misunderstanding of his internal processes, he may behave unpredictably and strangely. But parents need to be prepared for this and, if possible, prepare their child for the upcoming changes. While nothing is happening yet, it will be interesting for the child to learn much that is useful about himself and mentally prepare for the unknown that will definitely come.

It is important for parents to study very seriously the peculiarities of adolescent behavior, what difficulties their maturing child will encounter and how they should behave, how to love and what they should not do, and in prayer ask for wisdom and light about this time. The importance of this information is extremely great and necessary, because under the influence of incomprehensible thoughts and feelings, a teenager may not cope with the pressure and influence that has befallen him and commit suicide. Unfortunately, this grief takes place in our world and, strangely enough, according to statistics, in economically stable countries this happens more often than in those where people struggle with poverty.

In the desire to be alone, a teenager may hide his experiences and be in a state of clinical depression. His brain is actively developing, especially in the area responsible for controlling emotions and foreseeing consequences. And when he falls into hopelessness due to mockery, violence, unrequited love or conflict with parents, he may feel that there is no way out of this and life becomes unpleasant. If among the multitude of peers he has no close friends or the society of peers does not accept him, this creates a feeling of deep loneliness that depresses the young soul.

The enemy of souls and his army of demons know what your teenager is experiencing and are always ready to offer him something of their own that will destroy his soul and body, using both cruel methods of influencing his mind and pleasant

seduction. They can encourage peers to create bullying against your teenager and show incredible cruelty. And in such a state, the child will not have peace even at home.

Unconditional and active parental love will help the teenager have an excellent alternative for developing positive emotions, while intercessory prayers and confidential conversations will work miracles of transformation in the teenager's consciousness.

It is important for parents to let the child understand that they are his allies and that Jesus is on their side, that together it will always be easier for them to find a way out of any situation and problem.

The prayer of faith casts out evil spirits and brings peace to the soul. Children taught this from childhood will not forget it in adolescence either. Jesus will not leave any sincere and struggling soul in hopelessness or loneliness and will give desired peace to all who come to Him.

The world sets many empty demands and expectations on young people: you must be strong, beautiful, successful, rich, popular, fashionable, and if there is some inconsistency with these norms in you, then you are inferior and will not have a "place under the sun." And unfortunately, many young people swallow this bait and become slaves to worldly standards, trying to reach that rainbow that is so close but so inaccessible.

The emotional world of a teenager is a very complex process of simultaneous growth of spiritual, mental and physical functions of the organism. The fact that a child externally begins to look like an adult does not mean that he is the same inside. He does not yet have enough life experience and knowledge, and the lack of information about what is happening in his organism makes him very vulnerable in many questions.

But this process of growing up and transition from childhood to youth through an abundance of new feelings and emotions was not designed by us. The wise Creator determined precisely this time for such changes, and if one enters the adolescent period

competently, then hidden blessing can be found in every incomprehensible problem.

Teenagers at this time may feel unprotected, misunderstood, rejected. Any careless word can plunge them into deep despondency or fill them with excessive joy. Someone said that in this period, to understand everything that happens with teenagers and what they feel, everything needs to be multiplied by 10. Their feelings are so heightened.

Mood swings are similar to emotional swings, which is connected to hormonal changes in their organism. They very much want to be independent but at the same time be under parental care. They strive for independent life but cannot yet provide for themselves. This causes internal conflict and emotional tension.

Unconditional parental love is very needed by the teenager during this period. It, like a strong anchor, holds his "swaying ship" among the excitement and storms in consciousness. No matter how difficult it may be for him, the awareness that he is always loved and accepted without any "ifs" helps him have life orientations and cope with any trials.

In search of his identity, the teenager may surprise his parents with his appearance and behavior. It is very important for him to be accepted in society of those like himself and have friends his own age. Any mistake or failure may cause anxiety and sadness in him.

At this age he begins to better understand other people's feelings because he knows how this looks in himself.

Parents should understand that any whims of their growing son or daughter are a stage of development and growing up. The teenager needs to feel freedom and independence, but within wise boundaries that should be firmly established and not violate the order of other family members.

He needs to be taught to talk about his feelings and analyze what is happening to him. Understanding parents can themselves describe internal processes in the growing body and

tell how they went through this stage of growing up. This knowledge will help the teenager accept any new trial as a norm of life and cope more easily with his emotions.

Very important is spiritual and prayer support from parents. Understanding their love and constant reminding of God's love will preserve the teenager from many thoughtless steps and lay a strong trusting connection with Heaven.

The adolescent age is considered a stage of maturity in which young people's decision to make a covenant with God is conscious and they are given the right to accept water baptism and enter church brotherhood with full membership rights.

Parental support during the adolescent period is invaluable and irreplaceable. These are the first people who take the fiercest blows of negative mood and excessive joy. And the more they love, the more they can hear and receive blows directed at them.

And rigid dictatorship in the family suppresses the teenager's emotions, but this can lead to a dangerous internal explosion. Let your love and acceptance of your child make you those people with whom he will boldly share everything bad and good that overflows his inner world. It will be painful, but love will endure everything, especially if you understand what is happening and continue to love.

Questions for Reflection

1. Please read Eccl. 11:9; Jer. 29:11; 1Tim. 4:12; Ps. 119:9; Isa. 26:3; 41:10; Phil. 4:6-7; Prov. 3:5-6; Rom. 8:38-39; Eph. 4:29; 6:1-4, in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What was revealed to you in this chapter?
4. What is a teenager's emotional world?
5. Is it important for parents to understand what their teenager is experiencing?
6. Why can teenagers seem unpredictable and strange?
7. How can parents help a teenager cope with emotional swings?

8. Why is spiritual support important in a teenager's life and how can it be given?
9. Why is love and acceptance of a teenager without conditions so important during this period?
10. How can parents correctly instruct a teenager in faith?
11. How can we help a teenager realize the significance of his inner world?
12. Why can striving for society's ideals and standards be destructive for a teenager?
13. Why is it important to discuss with a teenager the process of growing up and changes in his organism?
14. How can we cope with a teenager's mood when it changes sharply?

Teenage Rebellion

Rebellion is a form of active resistance against established order, authority and unjust actions that exceed their authority. Teenage rebellion is an attempt by a teenager to declare that he is no longer a child and that parents should reconsider their habitual attitude toward him. This is a natural stage of growing up that parents so fear. When it comes, their natural reaction is an attempt to maintain their power in the usual form and achieve continued obedience and respect, even if extreme measures have to be taken for this. And the teenager sees this picture completely differently, does not intend to give up and tries to express his protest as he understands it.

In a child's life there are many cases of manifestation of rebellious spirit. But with a small person this passes quite painlessly, as the little one does not yet have enough strength, and his will is not accustomed to long resistance. When he begins to walk independently and resists anyone's help in every way, wise parents understand that the time has come for his independent steps, and they are always nearby to support or approve the little one if he begins to fall or wobble. As a result, the child begins to walk independently, and no one tries to force him to crawl just because it is safer.

And when the little one learns to eat, this threatens a big laundry and general cleaning of his "workplace." But mother is not embarrassed by such a trial, and she is ready to wash and clean her child, just so he learns to eat independently faster.

But when the adolescent period comes, which is given to teach the child to be absolutely independent and self-reliant, parents try to keep him in the "stroller" of their rules or take away from him the "spoon" that he now wants to use himself. During this period, parents need instruction and teaching more than their teenager. The young person will grow up and become independent despite everything, but parents may not understand what is happening and why their child rebels against them so much, since they do everything from the heart and with the best intentions. After all, this is their child, whom

they gave birth to and raised for themselves. Their own flesh and blood. We won't give him to anyone!

How do you look at a five-year-old child with a pacifier in his mouth? I think you feel sorry for his parents, who for personal convenience do not try to teach the child independent life without this pacifier. As a result, he becomes a winner, knowing how to resist his parents' will.

It is necessary to be prepared for teenage rebellion and understand what it is and why it happens. This is not a declaration of war and not an attempt by the teenager to break his parents' will, but rather his cry of soul that he has transitioned from childhood to youth and wants to learn to be independent in making decisions and bear responsibility for his choice. The parents' task is to give the teenager freedom in these independent steps, but continue to be nearby, support him in falls and continue to love him and each other despite everything.

During the growing up period, the teenager develops his own "self." He does not wish to blindly observe all rules and be obedient only because parents want it so. He wants to understand why these rules are given and why they are such and not different. His rebellion becomes self-expression of a new worldview and an attempt to independently understand the logic of family structure. It is important for him to understand how far he can establish the boundaries of his personal life in which he will not be controlled. He needs not only orders and demands, but also logical understanding and explanation: why should this be exactly so? If he feels injustice toward himself or violation of his boundaries, he may allow himself indignation.

Of course, not all teenagers are the same, each of them has his own temperament and willpower, but the principle of transition to independent life is the same for everyone.

They all experience strong hormonal and internal restructuring of the organism, enter the phase of active growth and change of psyche. This causes internal stress, which they do not yet know how to suppress—and should not do so. Parents, through their

ignorance in this sphere, may create martial law at home and begin a war without winners, with festering wounds and broken hearts. But if they understand what is happening with their teenager, this period can become the best time for strengthening love and friendship with their maturing child, helping him become a full and independent person.

The teenager's environment, books he reads, or films he watches can influence the intensification of teenage rebellion. If in the society of peers to which he belongs, rudeness, impudence and insolence are accepted, he involuntarily copies this behavior model and brings this spirit into his family. It is important for parents to understand what influence their son or daughter has fallen under and show wisdom in suppressing such an unclean spirit.

Bad company corrupts good morals, but if you raised Christian virtues and trusting relationships in children from childhood, in adolescence you will not have to wage an unequal battle and fight with an inveterate egoist who cannot be managed. Children accustomed to obedience will be more compliant in their teenage rebellion compared to those raised by the internet, television and the street.

Do not respond with aggression to aggression. Your teenager is not going to deprive you of life, he is simply fighting for his rights. Calmly listen to his anger, let him speak out, listen to his words and complaints. Even if you disagree, do not hurry with an answer, but wait for a calmer atmosphere when he can listen to you. During indignation he may not accept even reasonable arguments. Give time for emotions to cool and pray to yourself for the current situation.

Try to give logical explanation for every prohibition. And do not let your pride dictate its demands in establishing dictatorship of power. You will definitely lose if you begin to act authoritatively, without explanations, simply because "I said so" or "I want this." God does not approve of such behavior and will not bless you in violating others' rights to freedom and self-determination.

Teenage rebellion existed in all times, and the apostle Paul wrote in Eph. 6:4: "And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord." Be an example of love and friendly spirit, and this will bring you victory in all relationships.

Give the teenager more freedom, but at the same time let him understand the power of responsibility for his choice. And always remember that you are confidently approaching that moment when you will have to give your teenager complete freedom and release him into this world forever, so that he lives independently of you.

The teenager's rebellion is his new language, incomprehensible even to himself, with which he tries to convey that he very much needs parental help and understanding. This is not a war to the death, but a new stage in relationships that opens a new page of independent life for the young person.

Questions for Reflection

1. Please read Eccl. 12:1; Prov. 1:22-23; 10:1; 13:1; 15:5; 17:6; 20:11; 23:22-23; 29:17; Deut. 21:18-21; Col. 3:20-21; Gal. 6:9; Heb. 12:10, in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What was revealed to you in this chapter?
4. Is knowledge important that teenage rebellion is a natural stage of development?
5. What do teenagers rebel against? And can this be avoided in one's family?
6. What mistakes do parents most often make in response to teenage rebellion?
7. How should one correctly react to a teenager's cry of soul?
8. How does peer society influence teenager behavior?
9. What is the difference between rebellion as a cry for help and rebellion as aggression? Should these concepts be separated?
10. Why is it important to logically explain your demands to teenagers?

11. How can one understand where the boundary passes between reasonable control and violation of the child's personal boundaries?
12. What Christian virtues help cope with teenage rebellion?
13. What can parents do to prevent negative environmental influence on the teenager without violating his freedom?
14. What role does prayer play in difficult situations with teenagers?

Environmental Influence

When a wheat grain is planted in moist soil, it begins its growth according to certain laws. First the green, then the ear, then full grain in the ear, and after that ripe grain. And when the fields are white, they need harvest. Our children grow and develop according to the same principles. As their body develops, so together with it the soul and spirit develop. And when God-fearing parents lay a firm foundation in their child on biblical principles, his character develops under the influence of the Holy Spirit and the seed of truth grows according to certain laws, forming a certain way of thinking of the righteous. This is quite a prolonged process, but it forms a certain worldview that will withstand any storms and trials. And, as a rule, in adolescence, such young people make a decision about concluding a covenant with the Lord, through accepting water baptism, in order to already consciously and legally belong to their Savior and build their personal relationships with Him.

This is how it happens in ideal and this is what God wants. But from life we see that not all our children choose life with God and some of them go into the world, while others continue to attend worship services but without desire to become part of church brotherhood.

Just as many factors can influence growing greenery that can slow the growth of the ear, and sometimes even stop it, so the environment into which he has fallen or which he has chosen for himself can influence the life of a growing person.

For a teenager, a social environment of young people just like himself is very important; he wants to have close friends in his environment, authoritative people, to be like someone, correspond to fashionable trends and be significant in his environment. And all these things may be more important to him than his parents' society and their words.

During the period of intensive growth, the teenager seeks his identification and wants to try everything and find his place. This is a very interesting period of formation and for believing

parents it is the most anxious time when they go only by faith and prayer, hoping that all trials will be for good.

Unfortunately, many people, in order to understand that dirt is dirty and painful, need to fall into it headfirst, and then regret it for a long time, but draw conclusions and begin to value cleanliness.

In the parable of the loving Father and two prodigal sons from Luke 15:11-32, we see an example of how the world can seduce our children, and then a revaluation of values occurs in their consciousness, so that they begin to value the true and truly understand what their loving parents taught them.

Young people vitally need society of those like themselves, where they can reveal their abilities on equal rights and have personal interests. The influence of such societies is very strong and can discourage parents and cause a storm of protest. We very much want our children to be with us, under our protection and supervision. And many, for this sake, are ready to buy computer games, smartphones and televisions, just so their child is in sight and accessible. But these gadgets can also destroy the teenager's mind, just like bad communities.

The best thing parents can do for their teenager is to love him and be his friends, allowing him to choose his own life path and bear responsibility for his choice himself, but at the same time actively participate in his life with their wise influence and personal example.

Remember that your children are always watching you. They will not miss anything in which you make mistakes or do not correspond to your words.

Your correct questions can direct their consciousness in the right direction and reveal to them the consequences of their choice before they burn themselves. Our task includes getting ahead of the world and this advantage is important not to lose.

For example, a question about your teenager's friend: "How do you feel next to this person? Does he help you become better?" will give reason to think about the influence that comes from

his friend. It is important not to forbid, but to guide. Become a navigator who does not scold and does not argue with the traveler, but always shows the best path to the desired goal.

It is good if your Church has certain youth groups, clubs or sections where your teenager can go. But if this does not exist, then try to organize something similar in your own home.

Also try to find out who is an authority in your young person's eyes and why this authority has won your teenager's heart. Through unobtrusive questions you can help reveal the true motives of this or that successful person, understand the direction of his life and convey to consciousness that mistakes are characteristic of all people. As a rule, famous athletes, artists, bloggers, singers attract youth attention, and instead of scolding someone, discuss together the life and influence of these people and offer your own authorities who will be interesting to your growing children.

It is important to convey to the teenager the idea that all these famous people are in trend not because they imitate someone and copy someone's life, but because they create their own image and promote their own trend.

Any hobbies, fashionable movements, popularity and fame pass, become outdated and are forgotten. And trying to build one's life on this is like chasing the wind, hoping to catch it. Friends' opinion and evaluation is important now, but it should not be a stimulus for recognition of your uniqueness. You are special and this is your value. Express these thoughts to the teenager unobtrusively. Not immediately, but in due time he will remember them and they will have proper influence.

One father decided to show his teenager how the opinion of those around is not long-lasting. He bought himself a pink jacket decorated with colorful flowers and went to the market in this outfit together with his son. On the first day many sellers laughed at such strange attire, on the next day only a few smiled maliciously at the strange appearance, and afterwards no one paid attention to the father's colorful clothing, everyone was busy with themselves and their concerns.

Trying to please everyone is the most useless occupation that is very tiring, deprives of strength and means and gives nothing.

One should not criticize fashion, but you can ask: "Why did this become fashionable now? Who earns from this? Where will this trend lead? How long will it last?"

Parents can explain to their teenager that being yourself is a feat and strength. Tell him about his strong sides, about his uniqueness, about his talents and that he can also influence others. If he sits for hours on the internet watching what others publish there, then inspire him to make his own interesting publications, create his own channel and study the interests of his audience and give this world something personally his own.

Discuss your teenager's interests and participate in them sincerely, with desire to help and support. Tell about how all outstanding people in history went against the current, against general opinion, against habitual traditions and trends, they were not afraid of condemnation and as a result achieved recognition for their persistence and principled stance. What is important in life is not recognition from friends and crowd, but internal harmony with oneself and God.

Questions for Reflection

1. Please read 1Cor. 15:33; Prov. 11:9; 13:20; 14:7; 22:24-25; 24:1-2; 27:17; 28:7; Ps. 1:1-3; 2Cor. 6:14; Rom. 12:2; 2Tim. 2:22; James 4:4; Phil. 4:8, in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What was revealed to you in this chapter?
4. Why does a teenager's environment play an important role in forming his character?
5. How can parents preserve a teenager's trust in order to continue positively influencing him?
6. Why is friends' opinion often more important to teenagers than parents'?
7. How can one gently but effectively direct a teenager in the right direction?
8. Why can bad friends turn out to be more influential than good ones?

9. What is the danger of imitating idols and celebrities?
10. What steps will help a young person strengthen in his choice to follow God despite society's pressure?
11. How did environment contribute to the spiritual fall of biblical heroes such as Lot or Solomon?
12. Why do some young people leave the church although their parents tried to instruct them?
13. Should parents also reconsider their own environment and determine what influences them as well?
14. How can I learn to resist negative influence without losing love for people?

Peer Influence

During the period of growing up, a teenager seeks his social environment among similar teenagers for personal relationships. This has always been so and will be so after us. This can be a company with one friend or a large number of people.

Contact with peers teaches the teenager to develop communication skills, interaction, conflict resolution, understanding of others' feelings and emotions, expands horizons. In such relationships, a team sense of responsibility develops, where each person considers himself part of a common cause and understands that his contribution to this cause is in demand and irreplaceable. The friendly atmosphere of such communities beneficially influences the formation of noble character traits, forms self-confidence, gives significance and creates a certain authority in friends' eyes. Being accepted among one's own is, for a teenager in this period, much more important than everything else. And, as a rule, teenagers adopt the spirit of their environment and under this influence form corresponding habits. If this is a sports section and the team has a certain program and goal, then most likely all of them will be equally taught to support each other and think about common success.

If this is some volunteer movement, then the teenager learns together with others to serve people and receive true pleasure from this.

Peer influence can have both a positive effect and exert negative influence on the formation of harmful and unhealthy habits.

Parents sense very well the state of their child's soul and it is not difficult for them to determine what environment their teenager has fallen into. He simply cannot hide in himself the influence under which he has fallen and will transmit it further.

If your young person becomes aggressive or withdrawn, often gets irritated or rude, stops being interested in what he used to

love, then the root of such a state should be sought in the circle of his new communication. Parents can no longer take their son by the hand and ask him to introduce them to his friends. But with their friendly and unobtrusive questions they will be able to learn important details of who and how their son spends time with. It is important that the teenager does not feel pressure or interrogation, otherwise he may not tell anything.

The circle of communication and circle of friends of a teenager can change for various reasons and, as a rule, this is immediately reflected in his behavior at home.

If he avoids communication, evades answers, is caught lying or begins to study poorly or completely neglect studies, develop new harmful habits, dress strangely, then parents immediately see that their teenager has fallen under bad influence. Panic, accusations, prohibitions and aggression, in such cases, are not the best model of behavior.

Try to understand what is happening with your child. Find out what attracts him to this company? Why did he choose precisely these friends? How reliable are they in a difficult situation and what are their goals in life?

The teenager's choice of environment and what influence he falls under is not a random circumstance that unexpectedly fell into his life and now just needs to be accepted. As a rule, his friends are familiar to him from childhood, from school, and parents already know much about those with whom their children communicate and what interests and inclinations they have. And influence toward evil does not come spontaneously to unexpectedly enter life. A righteous person from childhood is taught to distinguish good from evil and he is accustomed to resist evil influence, and it is not so easy for the enemy of souls to catch this soul in his nets. A child who from childhood is taught to choose right things and is under the attentive care of parents, already from early childhood admits into his life such friends with whom he can calmly share and exchange his thoughts and feelings. And peer influence during the adolescent period will not catch a righteous soul off guard.

Any parental mistake, their ignorance in educating trusting relationships and good qualities of soul in childhood, will be reflected during the adolescent period. That seed which the enemy of souls sowed in the child's heart will begin to sprout and bear its fruit. Not only bad company can corrupt your teenager's good nature, but he himself can form bad communities and exert bad influence if his spirit is not under God's guidance.

Not so many books are written about righteous children; mainly parents are taught to solve problems and seek ways out of difficult situations. But is it worth bringing matters to such extremes in order to finally understand that the Bible is right and I was ignorant?

But there is good news that our Heavenly Father helps seeking and concerned parents find the best way out of any situation when they begin to sincerely cry out to Heaven. If I did not tell my child about God, then starting from the adolescent period I begin to tell God about the child, and the Lord listens to me and answers. He respects each person's choice and begins to teach him precisely when the heart is ready to listen and change.

Good is drawn to good, and the carnal is attracted to evil. I know many families who, for the sake of their children's future, left their native places and moved to where their children could attend Christian school and study in a Christian environment. This decision and corresponding new environment for the teenager has a positive result on his further choice of life path. But parents are not relieved of responsibility for the influence they exert in their home.

Remember that your friendliness, unconditional love, acceptance without any "ifs" are needed by your teenager at any time and whatever company he may fall into. Your love is that strong anchor that can hold the ship of feelings and passions and not let them finally break free from the chain and forever disappear into the abyss of lawlessness.

The parable of the prodigal son from Luke 15:11-32 teaches many important principles that parents need to understand:

respect for freedom, waiting for return and joyful acceptance without any "ifs."

Your teenager will definitely have friends; he will go through enchantment and disappointment in these relationships, through infatuation and betrayal, through delight and despondency. This is how this world is arranged and the Lord wishes to be in all this with each of us. Parents should remember themselves, their salvation, their personal life and their interests. The Lord will gladly take upon Himself all your worries about your teenagers and give you peace when you cast all this upon Him, for He cares for us (1Pet 5:7).

Your son's friends and your daughter's girlfriends are their friends, with whom not you but they must live and communicate. Accept this as an inevitable fact. After all, you too have childhood friends who have no relation to your parents?

God will always give wisdom to seeking and thirsting parents about what alternative they can create or offer when this is in their power. But in all this your unconditional love must be present; without it even the kindest deed will be bad, and with it the biggest mistake will turn to good.

God acts in this love, and He never loses and always finds the best way out of any situation. His influence is stronger than everything earthly and He knows everything.

Questions for Reflection

1. Please read Rom. 12:2; Eccl. 9:8-10; Prov. 13:29; 14:7; 17:17; 18:24; 22:24-25; 27:17; 1Cor. 15:33; Gen. 2:18; James 4:4; 2Cor. 6:14; John 15:13; Isa. 41:6; Matt. 18:20, in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What was revealed to you in this chapter?
4. Why do teenagers strive so strongly for approval from their peers?
5. How can spiritual values help a teenager resist negative peer influence?

6. How can one recognize early signs of negative peer influence?
7. Why is it important for teenagers to feel that their contribution to the group is significant?
8. What biblical stories can be used to inspire teenagers in choosing friends?
9. Why do some teenagers choose negative companies despite proper upbringing?
10. What qualities should a teenager have to become a leader rather than a follower in a group?
11. Why is it sometimes difficult for teenagers to admit that their environment has a bad influence?
12. What strategies can be applied to inspire teenagers toward positive communication?
13. Why is it easier for some teenagers to succumb to negative influence than to fight it?
14. How can we help a teenager maintain self-respect if peers reject him?

Faith and Doubts

Children who grew up in a family of believing parents, as a rule, have a general understanding of the Bible, about the plan of Salvation, about Jesus' sacrifice. They have favorite biblical heroes, and they well remember all those stories about the life of many biblical characters that were so often read to them.

Many parents introduce their children from birth to the world of the Bible and accustom little ones from the earliest age to be part of family worship, common prayers and church attendance. For children raised in such conditions, religious life in purity and righteousness is a norm of life, and they do not know the depths of Satan and are not under the power and oppression of sin as it can be in families where they do not know Christ.

It is considered that until adolescence children are credited with their parents' righteousness, but sometime the moment comes when they themselves must choose their path and build their personal relationships with God. And if they do not know how to make this transition, and parents do not instruct them in this question to pass to them the relay of their faith and personal relationships with Christ, then the enemy of souls will certainly use this ignorance on the part of parents and try to entice young souls with his temptations. Evil spirits do not disdain anything, and they have many means in their arsenal to catch inexperienced and naive teenagers in the net.

Parents can hold their teenagers by means of an "uncircumcised spiritual umbilical cord" and lead their maturing children by their faith further through life, protecting them from attacks from outside. But if their children love the freedom of independent choice, then this will not last forever, and sometime God Himself will intervene and allow such a situation that the teenager will rebel and begin to fight for his freedom to choose his path himself and what to believe in.

It is difficult to say what exactly needs to be given to a teenager so that he becomes a believing person, as his will and his desires are free to choose what he wants and what the heart is

drawn to. God gives advice about constant instruction of young people, which acts by forming a certain consciousness and thinking, but the final choice of path is made by the person himself.

Faith and personal relationships with Christ will tell how a teenager, and later an adult person, can avoid bad communities, and bad communities will tell how to lose faith and relationships with God and receive doubts and vanity in exchange.

But, strange as it may seem, the task of wise parents includes the task of teaching their child to doubt and be able to manage his doubt. And we are not talking about doubt in God's word, but about doubt in the world, whether what it offers is really so good.

Truth is unique in that it will not cease to be truth under any trials. And if it is conducted through the sieve of doubts, it does not lose its purity and strength and always remains truth.

It is quite normal if a teenager has natural doubts about the power of God's word and the reliability of biblical events. Suggest he keep a "Notebook of Doubts" where he could write down all his questions and complaints to God and His commandments. If the teenager does not believe in the power and effectiveness of prayer, then let him begin to pray and write down all his prayers in this notebook. Parents should explain that there are conditional and unconditional God's promises, and there are also such answers where God can answer either "yes" or "no" or "wait," as He better knows what is more needed for the one asking.

Personal prayer with the purpose of understanding the power of truth will help the teenager himself see the power of God's word and understand who is right and who is not. God will answer any challenge and any test, as He did in Job's life or in response to the doubts of His disciple Thomas.

Doubt teaches the teenager to ask right questions and find right answers to them. If he does not learn this art himself, then the enemy of souls will begin to offer him his own answers, as

he did with Adam's wife. Parents' task includes teaching the teenager not only to ask needed questions, but also to analyze what is offered as answers.

A child taught from childhood good manners and biblical principles already has a firm foundation and correct orientations in his heart that will help him manage his doubt regarding incomprehensible things.

One cannot accept everything the world offers on faith. Beautiful packaging does not speak of useful content, and parents can quickly prove this. All kinds of news do not tell the whole objective truth, and this can also be quickly revealed. And since we live in a world of information, healthy doubt will help filter all the garbage and choose what is right and useful.

The same approach works well in relation to all kinds of communities and companies. The teenager needs communication, and he seeks relationships with peers to become part of a certain society, but he can choose and analyze whether he needs what this world offers and how dangerous this society is.

If you, parents, get ahead of the world and teach your children in advance to doubt everything that is in the world and test everything, this will preserve them from many troubles. God will help teenagers who doubt worldly offers and give them the right direction. They will hear God's voice behind them and choose the right path.

The ability to manage one's doubt is called critical thinking, and it must be formed so that it protects from evil.

How does this work? When I came to live in Germany in 1993, I was surprised by the variety of products in the store and how they were packaged. I wanted to try everything, which I did. But God sent me the light of dietary reform, and I became more selective in choosing food. And when I began to study the contents of packages, I was surprised how such things could be offered to people, and began to put harmful goods on my "blacklist." Now, entering a supermarket, I simply do not pay attention to beautiful packages; my critical thinking taught me

not even to touch them, and I calmly pass by and choose what apparently does not contain dangerous ingredients. Of course, it would be better to grow and prepare everything myself, but this is not always possible for me. But I do not judge others if they choose what is harmful to me. This is their right, and I think about my safety.

Such thinking is not formed in one day, and your teenager will make mistakes, and this is part of the working process. Discuss this, together decide how to avoid stepping on the same "rake" next time? Ask leading questions, offer different options for choice and pray for God's presence in your children's lives.

If you offer your son a choice: go to the garden and help you weed the beds or stay home, he will choose home. But if you pose a choice between weeding or watering, planting seeds or pruning branches, then he has a choice but no chance to stay home. But one should not abuse such a way of posing questions so that it does not become manipulation. Be wise in your offers and questions, because the flesh will always resist the spirit and choose the easy path. But when a question is posed wisely, it can set the right direction for thoughts and suggest the right solution and cause the teenager to understand and feel disgust toward any danger.

Questions for Reflection

1. Please read 1Thess. 5:21; John 20:27; 1John 4:1; Isa. 30:21; John 8:44; 14:1; Eph. 5:10; Phil. 4:8; Prov. 3:6; 14:15; James 1:6-8, in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What was revealed to you in this chapter?
4. How do faith and doubts help teenagers avoid the influence of bad communities?
5. What is doubt and is it always bad?
6. How can doubts contribute to strengthening true faith?
7. How can we teach a teenager to distinguish doubts that lead to growth from doubts that lead to destruction?
8. Why is it important to teach teenagers to doubt what the world offers?
9. Why is critical thinking important for recognizing truth?

10. How can we teach teenagers to filter information using truth?
11. Why is it important to show teenagers the danger of "beautiful packaging" of temptations?
12. How can we teach teenagers to analyze companies and communities they fall into?
13. How does prayer help teenagers find right answers to their questions?
14. What practical ways can we teach children to doubt everything except God's word?

Formation of Critical Thinking

Critical thinking is the teenager's ability to analyze received information, checking its reliability, detecting errors and drawing conclusions. This quality of soul helps a young person not become a victim of deception, not fall under others' manipulations, distinguish truth from lies and think rationally. Such thinking teaches to check and test everything before agreeing with it, look at a problem from different sides without being guided by emotions and feelings, learn something new, accept what corresponds to truth.

Parents can begin to educate such thinking in their child from an early age in the form of games with guiding questions that teach thinking in a given direction.

Since our world is full of all kinds of dangers and deceptions, the development of critical thinking will preserve the child from many troubles and teach him to see the world without naive trust. Though childhood is beautiful in its sincerity and naivety, but while sin exists in it, the enemy of souls will use childish trust in his interests.

Children, as a rule, are very curious, and they have thousands of questions to which they want to know your answers. Do not prevent them from asking you about everything; in your answers they receive confirmation in many things with which they will have to live further. Answer wisely and seriously. Though giving a correct answer is good, learn to answer a question with a question: "And what do you think?" or "How do you see this?" Such a question forces the child to seek answers to all his "whys" himself and share with you those conclusions that came to his mind.

Ask the child to describe this or that situation from his position and with correct questions lead him to the right solution or formulation. Such dialogues form in consciousness the ability to analyze and search for additional information. Do not forget to praise your young researcher for efforts and wise answers.

When you conduct such communication with a teenager, the principle of approach remains the same, only the level of questions touches more important life aspects.

You can take news or advertising as a topic for discussion and begin to discuss this from "for" and "against" positions. It is important to teach the teenager to describe his opinion from these two positions so that he learns to find something positive and see negative sides, and then, comparing these facts, draw conclusions.

If you have never practiced such communication in your family, then at first you may not be understood and they may be surprised by such a new approach, but be wise and constant in this teaching, and you will see interesting results.

Without a solid foundation of truth, all your arguments and facts can be shaky and incorrect, but when God's law, principles of mercy and justice, faith in God, spirit of friendliness and service to others lie at the foundation of everything, then very good things can be built on such a foundation.

Faith in God, which the Lord wishes to see in all His children, consists in forming personal trust in relationships with Jesus and faith in and expectation that God will certainly fulfill everything He promised. It is precisely knowledge of God's promises that lies at the foundation of any faith.

How does this phrase sound: "I believe that God will think of something to somehow solve my questions"? No certainty. And if you say this: "God promised to be with me wherever I go, and I believe that it will be so," then God's promise comes into force, and God's Word begins to fulfill what He promised.

Little children believe in God, and they should not be prevented from coming to Jesus. But a teenager may have questions and doubts, as there are not yet strong relationships with the Creator, and he needs help to have his personal experience and acquire correct understanding of God's role in his life.

God, in one place in all the Bible, calls us to test Him; we read in Mal. 3:10: "Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and try Me now in this, says the LORD of hosts, if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it." Suggest the teenager test God in this question, but explain that the blessings spoken of here imply not only material goods but also spiritual values and protection in all spheres of life. It is always easier to learn something when there are wise instructors. Allow the teenager to gain this experience.

Confidence in the power and immutability of God's word and its authority lays a solid foundation in human consciousness, and the formation of doubt and critical thinking in relation to the world will develop in the right direction and preserve the teenager's soul from many evils.

When I myself was a teenager, I chose a bad community for myself that corrupted my meager good morals. But I also noticed that not all my peers were drawn to us, and many classmates consciously avoided our company and did not wish to have anything in common with us. So your teenager will choose for himself not everything indiscriminately, but what will be to his heart and what will not contradict his personal attitudes. Critical thinking will preserve him in this choice from many mistakes.

Teach the teenager to defend his point of view and position if he understands that it does not contradict God's principles. Conduct training of such discussions with him and suggest what spirit is necessary to have in order to remain a winner.

I know a case when in one church a pastor organized an agreed meeting of his youth with representatives of other denominations and religions. The purpose of the gathering included a certain topic, and the guest was given the right to express his position, and the teenagers had to present their arguments in defense of their views. Such events have a share of risk that inexperienced or unestablished young people will believe in some delusion and leave the church, but with a wise

approach they, as a rule, became even more firmly established in truth and rejoiced in another victory of God's word. Their opponents' difficult questions forced them to seek needed answers, needed verses and remember what was found for next time. It happened that representatives of other religions cornered inexperienced teenagers with their arguments and left as "winners," but the wise pastor afterwards showed the young people those places in Scripture that broke all presented arguments and established the teenagers in truth.

When I mold a vessel from clay and let the sun fire it, I know that ahead this object awaits a fiery furnace that it cannot avoid in order to become suitable for worthy use. So too in teenagers' lives there will be a fiery trial that will help them pass through this heat and become even stronger and purer and be prepared for more serious trials.

Teach the teenager to identify manipulations, understand the spirit of other people, foresee the consequences of this or that event. Discuss what will happen if one acts this way or that. Discuss what was read or viewed. Teach to see good in people and notice hidden talents and peculiarities. Though this teaching may be perceived by the teenager superficially, in due time it will bring needed fruit.

Questions for Reflection

1. Please read Acts 17:10-11; Eph. 5:15-16; Eccl. 7:5; 1Thess. 5:21; Matt. 7:24-25; 1Cor. 2:14; Prov. 8:11; 13:20; 15:4; James 3:13; Isa. 1:18; 55:8-9, in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What was revealed to you in this chapter?
4. What is critical thinking?
5. Why is it important to check the reliability of all information?
6. How can a teenager's emotions influence decision making?
7. Why is it necessary to teach a teenager to consider a problem from different sides?
8. What games can be used to develop critical thinking in children and teenagers?

9. Why is it important to instill critical thinking from an early age?
10. What questions help form critical thinking in teenagers?
11. How does faith in God influence the development of critical thinking?
12. Why is it important to see not only bad but also good in people?
13. How can we develop in a teenager the ability to foresee the consequences of his decisions?
14. How can one distinguish the influence of friends and society from one's own point of view?

Education of Critical Thinking

If you write or speak to parents about the importance of correct spelling, it would be sufficient to give them one lesson on this topic so that they would then, for many years, pay attention to how this skill develops in their children, what mistakes they constantly make, how difficult this science is for someone. In any school, students study their native language for ten years or more.

And what do you think, how many years do parents need to spend to instill in their children what they themselves will not learn without outside help? I think this period lasts until coming of age, and when children grow up and leave their father's house, they should be finally and completely given into God's hands and in a prayerful spirit observe who they have become and what path they have chosen for themselves.

Many modern sources of information destroy the ability to analyze and delve into the essence of things. They, like fast food restaurants, offer an abundance of everything, filling consciousness with anything, but leaving the mind hungry, not giving what grants true spiritual health and happiness.

To raise one Christian from one child, parents need to give the best years of their life, invest the best time, spend the most needed money and show, at the same time, the longest patience, the most unconditional love and the most Heavenly wisdom. But it is worth it, and many men and women agree to such a sacrifice, and see a certain meaning in this, and are ready to refuse many other paths for this sake.

Educating critical thinking in a teenager is a very prolonged process that parents can launch, and its duration can last the entire remaining life if the taught young person understands the importance of such a worldview. You can give spontaneous lessons in this direction, or you can systematize this direction of life and introduce this discipline into daily life, making such communication fascinating and useful for everyone. I think it is very pleasant for every father and mother to hear analytical

reasoning from their children, starting from an early age, when the mind awakens and begins to put all familiar words and expressions accepted in your house into logical chains. And there is no greater joy for parents when their teenager gives wise answers to complex questions and then adheres to the set course.

Do not think that your correct questions are spoken to the wind. By forcing the teenager to give analytical answers, you help him make choices based on his own words, with which he determines the direction of life for himself.

There are many questions that can be briefly answered "yes" or "no." For example: "Did you like this?" But if you ask: "What did you like or not like?" - then you can hear a more detailed answer.

The most pleasant thing for parents is to hear from their teenagers such expressions: "And you know, dad, ..." or: "Mom, I want to tell you something important ..." Do not miss this moment and put aside everything in the world to carefully listen to what will be entrusted to you after these words. If you miss this opportunity several times, justifying yourself with the importance of urgent matters, then you risk never again hearing what your children wanted to reveal to you and not learning the details of their experiences, which are very important to them.

Educating critical thinking helps parents reach the level of deeper relationships with their teenagers. With your unobtrusive questions and your joyful reaction of an interested listener, you do not violate their freedom but help them find the right answer to many incomprehensible things in their life.

But such education should not concentrate on negativity and negative evaluation. In some cases you need to ask, what does Scripture say about this? Or, how does Heaven look at such an approach? But even in these questions it is important to sense the teenager's mood and his desire to continue the conversation in the given direction.

The Bible gives very much wise advice regarding the investigation of various questions. Even topics concerning personal salvation can be tested and double-checked by an inquiring mind and this is welcomed.

When Nathanael was told about Jesus of Nazareth, he critically perceived this information: "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" But he decided to personally test the recommended Person and involuntarily testified that He is the Son of God and King of Israel. (John 1:45-49).

Therefore do not worry when your children show skepticism about things incomprehensible to them. This is a good indicator that they think before simply agreeing with you.

For better understanding of how your questions might sound, I will give some list of them as an example, which you can formulate in your own way.

In discussing advertising: "What do you think, is this really as necessary as it is offered?" "How do you understand, who benefits from this?" "Isn't this manipulation?"

Viewing the message feed from friends on social networks: "What useful thing was learned from your friends' lives?" "What do you think your friends want to convey with their photos?" "Do you want to be like your friends and live as they show?"

When listening to news: "Can you distinguish fake news from real ones?" "What position do you take after what was heard?" "And let's look at this news from another side?"

About school life: "What would happen if you had no tests and exams?" "Why do students need homework? How would you study without it?" "What would you like to add to the school program?"

About various interesting facts: "How did this become known to you?" "Is there another opinion about this?" "How can this be useful in your life?"

About books read: "What important thing was revealed to you in this book?" "Do you want to try writing your own book?" "Why did the author choose precisely this topic?"

Discussing friends: "How do you see, do your friends influence you?" "If the police knew about everything your company does, would you have problems with authorities?" "Do you have such friends who would give their soul for you?" "How do you understand, what should or should not the closest friend be like?"

When making decisions: "What will happen if you act this way or that?" "Are there any other options?" "Are you ready to independently bear the consequences of your choice?"

In a bad mood: "May I sit quietly nearby?" "What do you want most right now: to talk, to be alone, or for someone to be nearby?" "If you need my help, I'm always nearby!"

When your help is needed: "What would help you feel better?" "Do you want to tell me something or do you want to know something?" "You don't need to tell me everything, but I'm always nearby to help you."

How your questions should not sound: "What's wrong with you?" "And why are you pouting again?" "Can you be more cheerful?" "And when will you get smarter?"

Respect and tact will never be superfluous in your relationships. Before you is not a small child, but an independent person, though still young.

Questions for Reflection

1. Please read 1Thess. 5:21; 1John 4:1; Acts 17:11; Col. 2:8; Prov. 3:5-6; 16:21; 18:13; 26:4; 1Cor. 15:33; Eccl. 7:25, in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What was revealed to you in this chapter?
4. Why is it important to develop this quality of thinking precisely in adolescence?
5. What prevents a teenager from thinking critically in the modern world?
6. What spiritual foundations can be laid to develop discernment?

7. What Bible characters are examples of critically thinking people?
8. How do you react when a teenager begins to doubt your words?
9. What is more in your questions: desire to instruct or desire to understand?
10. Is it important that you patiently wait until the child "matures" for a deep conversation?
11. How can you teach a teenager to check his opinion against God's Word?
12. Should a teenager have a place of solitude for reflection and prayer?
13. How can your personal example influence the education of critical thinking in a teenager?
14. What prayers should be said about developing critical thinking in your child?

Praising Your Son

Your teenage son is a man in whom the Creator has placed a need to be needed and respected. For him, praise, recognition, and admiration are more important than anything else. He doesn't even realize this, but intuitively strives toward places where he will receive this. He may have leadership qualities embedded in him, or he may be a follower and diligent executor, but in any case, his heart desires to hear worthy evaluation addressed to him.

We read in Luke 8:11: "...The seed is the word of God." Parents are given the authority to be God's representatives and to form their child's character and personality with their words. Words of blessing and curse have special power in the spiritual world and can set the direction of life, describe those goals that will be achieved, or be destructive and program failure and many problems.

A teenage son, though still young, is already a man who is being transformed externally and internally day by day. And along with his body, his mind matures. He greatly needs spiritual support from his parents, proper self-identification, objective recognition of him as a free personality. With their words of praise and approval, parents can become a blessing in the young man's further development. We read in Proverbs 18:21: "Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit."

Many fathers and mothers do not understand what power their words carry and how they can be embodied and materialized in their son's life. And this ignorance makes them spontaneous well-wishers who say not what is needed for their son's successful development, but what they feel or consider right and just, even if it is destructive to the psyche.

Such words of blessing as: "You will be a good father!" establish a goal that is not so unattainable and difficult. And if they say: "In you, son, is laid enormous good potential that will develop

and multiply over the years!" then this will also be fulfilled in the near future.

Don't look at the teenager's mood and indifference. He perfectly hears everything you say, how much it corresponds to reality, how sincere you are, and be assured that all your kind words of blessing will bring good fruit at the right time.

If you haven't monitored your speech before, then beginning to organize it will be difficult, but start and don't stop. Develop in yourself the habit of seeing the good, the positive, for which you can praise or thank the teenager. Dwell on those good motives that manifest in him, to specially note this. Don't be afraid to say kind words that will help him see his good qualities through your eyes. Pay as little attention as possible to mistakes and failures, and if they were clearly expressed, then assure your son that you believe in him and next time he will certainly act differently.

Your words of praise and approval have enormous significance and influence on the teenager's life and choice of path. They begin to come alive in his mind and protect from wrong steps when he doesn't know what's best. They stimulate him to good deeds that he wouldn't have planned to do otherwise. They point him to the better path that he didn't even know about before. They reveal those deep potentials of Heavenly blessings for the soul and life that could have remained unclaimed and forgotten.

It's important to be sincere and speak praise to the point. It should not concern external appearance and natural beauty of face, body, or clothing. It should not humiliate other people. It should not develop dependence on praise. It should not be selfish and manipulate consciousness. It should not be artificial and dishonest. It should not sound like for small children.

A river that has no riverbed will overflow in all directions, seeking and filling all lowlands and depressions, but if a certain channel is dug for it and it's directed to the right place, then it will obediently flow into this riverbed and flow along it in the

given direction. So your praise can set that direction of life in which it will be pleasant for your son to move and develop.

Parents have a fear that excessive praise will cause a feeling of pride in their son and make him arrogant. If you praise incorrectly and elevate the teenager above others, then this will not be a good seed. But in other cases, when praise is appropriate and timely, this needs to be done regularly, just as you eat three times a day, so praise substantially and just because.

Jesus praised the centurion who greatly surprised Him with his faith in the power of Christ's word: "Truly I tell you, I have not found such great faith even in Israel" (Matthew 8:10). The Lord objectively evaluated the Roman commander's faith and was not afraid to publicly praise him for it and then did what the centurion asked.

The centurion accurately described the action of the power of words: "...I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come,' and he comes; and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it" (Matthew 8:9).

Words of praise know how to produce in the teenager's life what you see in the perspective of his growth.

The expression: "I believe in you, you will certainly succeed!" lays down obligatory victory that will happen. And spiritually these words form the mind of a winner and will help in the future to go from victory to victory, even if they are no longer spoken.

Instead of reproaches for failure: "I told you so!" you can say: "I also had mistakes. Don't give up. You will certainly succeed!" or: "You tried so hard, and that's the most important thing. Don't give up, I believe you'll find a way out!"

Don't be afraid to admire your son: "You're becoming an adult and thinking like an adult man!" Don't hesitate to acknowledge him as better than yourself at this age. Let him understand that he can become smarter and stronger than you if he will learn this and have wisdom from God.

In front of other people you also need to praise the teenager, but in such a way as not to humiliate him and others. For example: "My son can make decisions himself and do what he promised" or: "At his age I was scatterbrained, but he approaches many questions very competently and seeks advice if he doesn't understand something."

Your face and your facial expressions can also praise your teenager and admire him without words. Sincere delight, genuine joy for his successes, encouraging symbols and gestures speak of much without extra words.

Praise for achievements and victories invisible to the eye: "I see how hard it was for you to listen to criticism, but you didn't respond in the same spirit and didn't argue, and in this you were at your best!" or: "You defended the weak and in this great strength was manifested!"

The spirit of praise should create, inspire, encourage, gladden the heart, return the dying to life, open new talents, and create something beautiful and important from nothing.

In my youth there were so few words of praise addressed to me, but that minimum so inspired me that I made many of these words the motto of my life and found support in them in difficult times.

You don't know when and how your words will bring good fruit, but if they are good, then the fruit will certainly be good. Sowing love, faith, and hope in the heart, you will never be left without a good harvest. And your reward will be very great.

Questions for Reflection

1. Please read Luke 8:15; 21:19; James 1:2-4; 2 Pet. 1:3-8; Rev. 14:12; Eph. 4:2-3; Rom. 5:3-5; 8:25; Gal. 5:22-23 in light of this chapter.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What did you understand from this chapter?
4. What is patience?
5. What types of patience do you know?
6. Why is it necessary to develop patience in children?

7. Is it worth having patience yourself before teaching it to someone else?
8. Is there anything in common between the patience spoken of in the Bible and what a child should have?
9. How can you determine a child's level of patience?
10. What methods for developing patience do you know?
11. What games can teach a child patience?
12. Why should patience be joyful and voluntary?
13. What to do if my child is irritable and impatient?
14. What to do if your patience has run out and you are afraid and cannot vouch for yourself?

Age-Specific Features of Praise

Proper praise for a teenager is as necessary for him as proper nutrition, proper clothing, and proper attitude. In the process of hormonal restructuring of the child's organism, much changes in the teenager's worldview, and he has many questions about this world and about himself. And at each stage of growing up there are certain features of perception and understanding of various factors of relationships.

In the transitional age, the teenager's soul is vulnerable, and it seeks recognition, self-identification, meaning and direction of life. At this time the teenager, though maturing, is usually still dependent on his parents and under their influence, and lives together with them and other family members. All the mentioned age periods can shift in one direction or another depending on the work of the hormonal system and the formation of the psyche.

The adolescent period begins at 10 years old, and at 12-13 it approaches a deep internal turning point, at which the teenager comes to realize that he is no longer a child, but not yet an adult. At this time personal formation of self-esteem and identity occurs. And if parents do not give their son the answers and support he needs, then he will begin to seek answers to all his "whys" elsewhere.

Words of approval, praise, and support lay the foundation for the development of good qualities and establish the right life direction. Parents' words of approval become a flashlight for him in the darkness of self-determination.

In this period it's important to praise for inner qualities of the soul: for honesty, for obedience, for kindness, making it clear that real men possess these qualities. It's worth encouraging any manifestation of Christian virtues that the son was taught and now makes decisions himself to act according to the light received. For example: "You showed so much patience, and this is a trait of God's character!"; "You're becoming more mature and making decisions yourself. I like this!"

It's also important to praise not for the result of completed tasks, but for the motive and efforts applied, even if the result was poor.

At the age of 14-15, the teenager becomes more independent, critical of any attitude from adults, inclined to struggle for his self-assertion. This age is considered the most difficult because there is a final parting with childhood, but not yet complete entry into adult life. At this stage of growth, strong character traits are formed, certain life values, personal worldview, and personal relationships with God.

It's important for parents to understand all these features and treat the maturing teenager with respect, who consciously distances himself from his parents, though he still lives under their care, but at the same time not to release the son into the power of absolute independence, establishing reasonable rules and boundaries for his freedom. He is inclined to do everything and decide everything himself and doesn't need unnecessary advice and valuable instructions. Any criticism addressed to him is met with hostility and very painfully.

The teenager at this age is very interested in everything connected with the search for the meaning of life, with determining true values, with choosing his future. His rich imagination opens great perspectives for development and learning, and friends and the culture of the environment have a very great influence on the choice of further life path.

Wise and sincere praise from parents at this age increases the teenager's self-esteem and is especially needed by him, as it can help him establish himself in the right direction. It's important in praise to emphasize strong masculine sides of character, speak as equals, show trust, note his maturity and responsibility. These should not be flattering words about what doesn't exist, but compliments to the point.

Even if the son pretends that your words are not interesting to him, be assured that he greatly needs them and they reach his heart. Under the feigned importance and independence beats a

searching heart that wants to find answers to the questions:
"Who am I?"; "Whose am I?"; "What am I here for?"

Words of approval can sound like this: "You know how to keep your word and fulfill promises—that's manly!"; "You handled the situation yourself—this says that you can be relied upon!"; "I'm glad that you make decisions yourself, like an adult!"

It's important not to humiliate the teenager at this age and not to speak with him as with a little child. He no longer considers himself as such. Don't reproach him for not earning anything himself yet and living in your house without paying for anything.

When your teenager brings you a box with all his favorite toys and asks to put them away somewhere, accept this action as the end of childhood and save this box for your grandchildren.

At 17 years old, an adult teenager lives in your house who has finally parted with childhood and fully entered adult life, and he needs such praise that will affirm him in maturity, inspire the implementation of new ideas, leadership, independent realization of promising plans. At this age it's very important for the teenager that people believe in him, see a man in him, bless him for future victories.

Praise should be concrete, for his actions, for motives and good character traits. It should not cause pride and superiority over others, but point out that every good talent is given by Heaven and approved by it. It should sound timely and appropriate, with love and faith in a better future.

Your praise at this age can and should have prophetic moments in it, revealing those possibilities that suit your son's character makeup.

Patriarch Jacob, when he gathered all his sons, spoke about them those prophecies that helped them see themselves and their descendants through God's eyes and in the future.

The absence of praise is also a message that tells a young man much about many things. He may subconsciously understand that he's not good enough, that he's not valued, not loved, and

what's the point of trying? Your praise is words of blessing that can sound to the invisible spiritual world as permission for action and service to your children. And your words of praise, spoken once appropriately, can then sound throughout your children's lives in their memory and inspire them to what they were called and blessed by you.

There are many good words and expressions that can inspire every person. Discover them for yourself, practice on your spouse. Learn to express them from the heart and give them to your children as a sign of your admiration and gratitude.

We read in Philippians 4:8: "Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things."

It's worth understanding in praise the deep needs of the teenager: recognition; respect; awareness of his value and necessity; understanding of uniqueness, both external and internal; that he is loved not for something, but just because.

Praise the teenager in prayer to God and thank the Lord for your wonderful heritage. It's important for children to hear this in your conversation with the Creator.

And the Lord materializes all your words into your children's lives.

Questions for Reflection

1. Please read Genesis 22:12; Proverbs 22:1; 1 Samuel 13:14; Mark 14:6; Daniel 5:4; Ruth 2:11-12; Romans 16:1-2; Luke 19:9; Matthew 25:21; Colossians 1:7, in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your memory?
3. What was revealed to you in this chapter?
4. Why is praise for a teenager as important as proper nutrition and clothing?
5. Why is it especially important in adolescence to praise for inner qualities and not just for achievements?
6. Why are ages 14-15 considered the most difficult period in adolescence?

7. How to properly praise a teenager so as not to cause resistance in him?
8. How do friends and environment influence the perception of praise from parents?
9. How to avoid praise causing pride and superiority?
10. Why can't you praise a teenager the same way as a small child?
11. How does the absence of praise affect a teenager's motivation?
12. What biblical principles can be used in praise? (Philippians 4:8)
13. How can you praise a teenager in prayer so that he hears it?
14. How can words of praise spoken in adolescence influence a person's entire future life?

Love for Your Daughter

In the Bible there is such advice for men that husbands should love their wives (Ephesians 5:25), and women are given other recommendations. I want to protest a little and defend men in the sense that they also need love and it would be good if this were clearly written about. But knowing masculine nature from the inside, I understand that for a man his wife's respect is much more important than everything else.

A teenage girl is a young woman who is designed by God to be loved. When this need is satisfied in her father's house, then she has no great need to seek this love in other people or in the company of peers. She knows that she is loved and this creates for her a certain foundation and powerful spiritual protection from attacks from outside. Though it's important for a teenager to be accepted and belong among their own, what happens at home and is laid in their heart has enormous influence on their mind and protects them among the storms of trials.

You need to love your teenage daughter from birth, not when she turns 13-15 years old. But precisely at this age you need to "double the portion" and be extremely wise parents to give her what's necessary, but at the same time respect her freedom and choice.

Words of love are like goads and firmly embedded nails, and their collectors are from one Shepherd (Ecclesiastes 12:11).

When choosing words of praise or some other actions of showing love, parents need to consider their daughter's love language, through which she will best understand your love.

In adolescence, a girl experiences very many physical and emotional changes that greatly worry and embarrass her. Her behavior and reaction can be unpredictable, as inner fears and insecurity can be expressed in pronounced feelings and incomprehensible behavior. Though her whole being strives for freedom and independence, like an immature child, she needs parental care and protection. She becomes very sensitive to

everything that concerns her and what and how people say to her.

It's very important for a daughter to understand that she is loved not for her appearance or some grades and results, but unconditionally and always, for who she is, and because this is right.

Any careless word concerning her appearance can deeply wound or embarrass her, so parents should be extremely delicate in selecting expressions, jokes, and compliments.

She greatly needs emotional support at this time, which parents can give her in the form of personal presence nearby, in confidential conversations, in common prayers for her.

Receiving unconditional love from her earthly father, a girl is able to understand how her Heavenly Father loves her and simultaneously build her relationships with Heavenly Powers. I very much like the constancy of God's love toward me, despite everything. It is precisely such an attitude from the Heavenly Father that helps me always find the best way out of any difficulties. But how I would want my earthly father to possess similar qualities of soul.

Parents don't know what storms and trials their daughter encounters, how words and mockery from peers can knock the ground from under her feet. But words of love, encouragement, and support that she constantly hears from her parents will be a strong anchor for her that won't let her ship break away into the power of raging waves.

In love there is special power that is transmitted from the loving person to the beloved and through them resists many attacks and temptations from outside. Love creates a powerful rear and is able to resist any attack of the enemy.

There are girls whom the Lord endows with special beauty, grace, and aesthetic perfection. They delight their parents with their appearance and "drive their peers crazy." But it's necessary to remember that such external appearance attracts the attention of many men with impure thoughts and plans, and

attractive girls are subjected to greater attacks from the enemy of the soul, therefore they need greater instruction from wise parents. It's important to convey to the girl the thought that beauty and chastity are given to her to gladden her future husband's heart and with her charm to give her friends and loved ones much happiness and inspiration.

Meeting attacks of the soul's enemy from outside, the teenage girl learns to reflect these attacks and develops her own defense strategy. But if she receives such education in conducting war and achieving victories in the right spirit from her parents or wise mentors, then it will be easier for her to achieve victories and not enter forbidden territory.

Though freedom implies allowing the daughter to choose her own path and build personal relationships with other people, trusting relationships will open to parents what their daughter lives by and what advice she needs at this time.

Mother and father have different approaches to life and each in their own way influences and supports their daughter. A girl needs a feminine point of view, but it's important for her to hear a masculine view on many things as well. Therefore fathers shouldn't distance themselves from their prickly teenagers, but participate in their lives in a friendly way, giving wise instructions in the form of fascinating stories about their past and about her future.

When a daughter behaves inappropriately or very rudely, don't rush to put her in her place with reciprocal rudeness or suppress her rebellion with parental authority in harsh form. You don't know what's happening in the child's heart at that moment and where the cause of such behavior lies. It's possible that it's some hormonal event that the teenager hasn't yet learned to cope with. It's best to respond calmly: "I see that it's very hard for you right now and I understand your feelings. Let's talk and discuss everything later when you calm down?"

Parents' love very strongly attaches their daughter's heart to them and their support will help her stand firm among many trials that she will never tell you about. A father's love protects

his daughter's heart from many mistakes and wrong steps. In such an attitude the daughter receives the necessary portion satisfying her emotional needs and she has no need to seek something similar in the world, as her father's love protects her soul from evil people. And if she does meet the "man of her dreams," then her father's love will help her soberly evaluate the new friend and plan serious relationships, guided by reason, not feelings.

Love for a daughter is not a one-time reaction to some behavior of hers, but a daily spiritual obligation based on understanding this responsibility before God. When a daughter knows and sees her parents' love for her from childhood, then she doesn't need to constantly prove this. At the right time she comes herself to refill her empty vessels, and when she forgets to do this, then loving parents themselves pour the necessary portion of love into her and release her to freedom, believing that she will stand firm.

God has a design, plan, and purpose for any woman at any stage of her growth. And parental love enters into these divine plans and accomplishes what should take place at the right time. Even when a girl chooses the wrong path, falls, or makes mistakes, then unconditional parental love will always be her support and that lighthouse that will shine at all times, pointing to something better.

Questions for Reflection

1. Please read 3 John 1:4; Deuteronomy 6:6-7; Proverbs 1:8-9; 23:24-25; Ephesians 4:29; 6:4; Hosea 11:4; 1 Corinthians 11:7; 1 Peter 3:3-4; 2 Timothy 1:7; Colossians 3:21, in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your memory?
3. What was revealed to you in this chapter?
4. Why is a father's love so important for a teenage girl?
5. How does a father's love differ from a mother's love in a daughter's life?
6. Why does a father's love help a girl understand the love of the Heavenly Father?

7. Why can a girl's external beauty be a source of dangers and temptations?
8. Why is the personal presence of parents so important for their daughter's emotional state?
9. Why is it important to sometimes just listen to your daughter without offering solutions?
10. Why is it important to tell your daughter about the value of chastity?
11. What words of love are especially needed by a daughter if she has experienced stress or disappointment?
12. Why should parents be mentors rather than controllers?
13. How to speak with your daughter about her future without pressure, but with wisdom?

Beloved Daughter

The love of father and mother for their teenage daughter is unique in its diversity, but it remains love, through whomever it may be manifested.

The Lord is present in our human love and through this relationship applies His hand and exerts His influence on the hearts of those with whom it comes into contact. And if parents understand whose vessels they are and who acts through them, then they can purposefully share the power of God's love and ask for greater love.

A father loves in a masculine way and does so sincerely, as he understands. His love is expressed concretely, rationally, purposefully, logically, and has a protective character, including mentorship, respect for freedom, and recognition of the right to choose. Though a woman's heart sometimes finds it difficult to understand masculine logic, it greatly needs this type of love and is very drawn to those from whom it can receive it. In her father's love a girl feels protected, becomes more confident in making various decisions, realizes emotional support, and doesn't experience fear of failure.

A father with his love for his daughter lays in her a sense of feminine dignity, helping her realize her true value and forms in her femininity that men so like.

A loving father reflects God's image, and under this influence the daughter develops comprehensively in a natural Heavenly environment of relationships, where her spirit, soul, and body are formed according to God's laws and are under God's protection.

By his attitude in love, a father forms in his daughter a true concept of beauty, which manifests itself not only in external appearance but also in inner qualities. A girl loved by her father has high self-esteem and feels confident in various life circumstances, even if her papa is far away.

Though fathers are not always verbose in expressing their feelings and emotions and differ in showing love from their wives, their language of love is understandable, visible from their deeds, and very comprehensible and needed by daughters, and sons too.

The father's role as spiritual mentor for his daughter is irreplaceable. With his unconditional love he demonstrates God's love and lays in his daughter's heart a solid foundation for developing her personal relationship with the Heavenly Father.

Many fathers care about gathering a worthy inheritance for their children, protecting them from poverty and need in the future, giving children what they themselves didn't have, but the best inheritance that fathers can pass to their children is faith in Jesus and personal relationships with Him. If this is absent, then everything else makes no sense, though it may ease earthly life.

A father's faith, his spiritual instructions, words of truth, personal example—all this leaves a certain imprint in his daughter's consciousness, and the Holy Spirit will remind at the right time everything that was heard by her.

It's not difficult for a loving father to admire his beloved daughter, see hidden blessings in her, reveal dormant talents, be support in difficult times, show due respect.

Fatherly love satisfies the daughter's emotional need for masculine love and protects the girl from seeking this love in other men.

One preacher joked: "Daughters choose husbands who are very similar to their fathers, which is why their mothers cry so bitterly at their weddings."

A mother's love is also very important and needed in the life of a teenage girl, and a son too. A mother loves in a feminine way and will never replace the father with her love. Her love is more emotional, deep, and intuitive. She loves with all her heart, with all her feelings, and is ready to sacrifice herself and her health.

She can warm, comfort, and caress her daughter in a way that no father can do. She understands her daughter's feelings and knows how to build confidential conversations, having personal experience of what her child is going through.

Mom helps form emotional maturity. She explains to her daughter what's happening in her body and that this shouldn't be feared. She teaches her daughter hygiene, cleanliness, neatness, explaining why this is needed and how it's useful.

A mother helps her daughter cope with emotional storms that often happen in adolescence and teaches understanding of other people's feelings.

Mom is something soft, warm, caring, tender. Her prayers for her daughter's happiness and well-being sound at all times, and with her interest in spiritual truths she is always a visual example for her little one.

Through her participation in her daughter's emotional world, a mother teaches her to correctly experience different events and voice the pain that comes uninvited from outside and crashes into life.

Some fathers consider that expressing tenderness, kind words, heartfelt embraces, and sensitivity for their maturing daughter is a manifestation of weakness for a strong man, thinking that the daughter will figure out that her father loves her from demonstrating his diligent work for the family's benefit. As a result, the girl develops hunger for masculine warmth, and she begins involuntarily seeking someone who would satisfy her thirst for fatherly love. And she finds not what she really needs.

A father can also from his selfish love begin to excessively control his teenage daughter and limit her freedom, which will inevitably lead to rebellion from the girl, to loss of trust in her father and desire to do something contrary to common sense to prove that she is free to act as she wants herself.

Misunderstanding of his daughter's feelings, her experiences and pain can also put a father in an awkward position and lead to breaking trusting relationships. What seems to a father like

foolishness and empty experiences can be for a girl the most important period of life and acute need for fatherly participation and support.

Mom should also understand that excessive care in adolescence won't bring blessings for forming her daughter's full personality. The girl may begin to fear adult life and cling so to her mother that then her entire future family will suffer from this. It will be difficult for the daughter to make independent decisions and take responsibility for her life.

But the biggest mistake a mother makes is when she begins to destroy her daughter's father's authority and complain about his failures and mistakes. These evil seeds will then be very difficult to remove from the girl's memory, and if they sprout, then the fruits of such sowing will be very bitter for everyone, including the mother.

Loving parents shouldn't condemn, blame, or criticize anyone in the presence of children. This spirit is very contagious and pleasant for fleshly nature.

For a teenage girl, the unconditional Divine love of both parents is important, both toward herself and between them toward each other. There is nothing more pleasant for a daughter than to see how her father loves and values her mother and shares these warm relationships with her, and how the mother fears her husband, showing him due respect, honor, and gratitude, teaching her daughter to manifest the same spirit.

How important it is for a daughter not to hear quarrels and disagreements in her father's house. What blessing the mutual love of all family members brings to each other! This is the practical side of truth—that we, loving God, love each other and in this mutual love return everything to Him who is Love.

Questions for Reflection

1. Please read 1 Peter 1:22; Proverbs 31:26-28; Titus 2:4-5; Exodus 2:16; Job 42:15; Esther 2:7; Psalm 143:12; Isaiah 49:15; 60:4; Joel 2:28; Acts 2:16-18; 21:9, in light of this lesson.

2. What other verses from the Bible came to your memory?
3. What was revealed to you in this chapter?
4. Why is it important for a girl to feel that she is a beloved daughter?
5. How does parental love influence the formation of femininity in a daughter?
6. Why do offenses accumulated in childhood often prevent a daughter from trusting her parents in adolescence?
7. How can parental love reflect the love of the Heavenly Father?
8. What biblical women can be examples for a daughter?
9. How to find balance between strictness and tenderness in raising a daughter?
10. Why is it important not to compare your daughter with other girls, even "for educational purposes"?
11. How often do you need to tell your daughter that you love her?
12. Where to start if there is a wall of misunderstanding between parents and daughter?
13. What to do so that your daughter remembers your love when she becomes an adult?
14. What can you change in your words and actions today to strengthen the relationship between children and parents?

Friendly Relationship

We read in Proverbs 17:17: "A friend loves at all times, and a brother is born for a time of adversity." Being parents to your teenager is a responsibility, but being his friend is a choice, it's an art, it's a new world of new discoveries, it's a whole science that cannot be learned all at once and successfully practiced for all subsequent life. Though this can be a general decision of the whole family, made at the next family council, the success of this undertaking depends exclusively on the personal will of each parent.

You need to honestly examine at what stage of friendship with your teenager you are and ask him himself whether he considers you a friend. A friend-father or friend-mother is not a buddy or pal who can condone bad behavior and "turn a blind eye" to violation of usual rules, but this is a wise mentor who communicates as equals, notices and observes good sides, knows how to listen to other opinions, doesn't judge, is honest, truthful, and isn't afraid to make mistakes and admit his mistakes.

Perhaps your son or daughter don't yet know what real friendship means, and you yourself don't quite understand this question well, but you can learn this in Christ's School of Love and practice the knowledge you receive in real life.

Friendship is a decision for life. This is the beginning of new relationships. This is an amazing lifelong journey into your child's heart. It's good when this friendship began in early childhood and in the teenage period it restructured itself to the needs of a growing person, but if it doesn't exist, then it must be born from above in your heart and become that unchanging principle of life that will always suggest correct behavior and give correct words.

It's best to say your decision to be a friend out loud so you'll be heard and people will be interested: what does this mean. In response you can say that you've made such a decision and now will do everything in this spirit and direction.

Teenagers are very sensitive to any falsehood and understand perfectly well how sincere you are in your friendship toward them. If you want to play theater with them, then maybe a couple of performances will receive their approval, but then they'll close this door, and it will be very difficult for you to open it.

You can initially be a poor friend to your teenager, but if you honestly acknowledge your failures and mistakes, apologize for breakdowns and inability, but at the same time choose friendship, then I think that over time everything will work out more professionally and competently for you.

Why do parents need to become friends with their teenager? Father and mother are parents and will remain so forever, and for this they only need to give birth. They can be educators and teachers up to a certain age, and further an adult person will already seek mentors and teachers for himself. Friendship with parents is very close trusting relationships that will be for the teenager that strong anchor that will help him hold on among raging hormonal storms and floods of feelings and have a strong connection with those who are older, wiser, and smarter in this period. No one can better understand and comfort their teenager like loving friend-parents.

If a teenager reads useful books about love for teenagers and comes with this knowledge to his parents, asking them to become his friends and start loving, forgiving, and understanding him, then most likely nothing will work out for him, since this decision is a conscious choice that father or mother must make themselves, understanding what this is.

Friendship implies genuine interest in the teenager's interests, in his tastes, in hobbies and games. It seeks any opportunity to somehow manifest itself, give something, participate in something.

If you see that you're not doing well at being a friend, then don't be afraid to admit this. If you get confused in your new relationships, then say that something isn't right with you, and let them be patient with you.

Talk with the teenager about friendship, how he understands it, what kind of friend he would like to have, what he would give in return to his friend in response to his friendliness. And, understanding the need of the growing person, give him what he wants.

Some researchers conducted an experiment and asked strangers about what kind of friend they would like to have in their life. All sincere answers came down to the same denominator—everyone wants to be friends with someone who is like Jesus and possesses Divine character. Your teenager is no exception to this experiment, he dreams of being friends with Jesus in you, and if he doesn't receive this, then he goes to seek Him elsewhere, but not in those people.

Friendship doesn't cancel home order and personal boundaries. Respect should be mutual. If the teenager has his own room, then you can't burst into it without asking. If he has his own smartphone or his own internet account, then don't read his correspondence without his knowledge and permission, and having read it, don't judge for stupidity or insolence. Don't demand from him a detailed report of where he was and what he did—this destroys trust and doesn't develop friendship. Put these boundaries in your heart and wait until you're given permission and trusted with another secret.

Friends need to find time for "one-on-one" communication. If you have little time or don't have it, then it needs to be allocated, but in such a way that the teenager would be interested in spending this time with you, although by his nature he always waits for these relationships more than you do. Let this be something informal, but on a permanent basis. You'll be surprised that the teenager has something to tell you and something to listen to you about.

Your friendship shouldn't become an "iron chain" on which you will now hold your child and establish the length of this "chain." Freedom from both sides is an integral part of friendliness.

If by your education and development you "know everything" and are "always right," then keep this "knowledge" to yourself

and don't bring it into your friendship. Learn to listen to what your friend knows. Let your wisdom combined with his creativity find mutual interests and come up with something common.

In your friendship there can be conflicts and misunderstanding. "Let not the sun go down" on these activities. Learn to forgive and ask for forgiveness first, not carrying bitterness or resentment within yourself.

Share how imperfect you were at the same age and how you suffered from your parents' misunderstanding, if this was the case. Let the child understand that you're not a perfect adult person, but one slightly older than he is, having childhood experience.

If you have photos or videos from your childhood, then show these to your teenager and tell about your past and what you experienced then.

If you're reading or hearing these words for the first time, and martial law is established in your house, then don't think that learning and accepting something new will immediately settle everything for you. Being a friend to your teenager is a prolonged process that must begin sometime, sometimes even on the "battlefield," and having begun, it should never end. And I want to assure you that the influence of this friendship will leave a mark for life and even after your death will warm your children's hearts with warm memories.

Questions for Reflection

1. Please read 1 Corinthians 13:4-7; Ephesians 4:2; Proverbs 10:12; 18:24; 19:20; 20:7; 27:6,17; Matthew 7:12; John 13:34-35; Galatians 6:1; Ecclesiastes 4:9-10; Amos 3:3, in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your memory?
3. What was revealed to you in this chapter?
4. What is the difference between "being a parent" and "being a friend" to a teenager?
5. Why is friendship with a teenager an "art" and "science"? What does this mean in practice?

6. What qualities should a parent have to become a real friend to their teenager?
7. Why is friendship a "decision for life"? What obligations does this impose?
8. Is it important to voice your decision to become a friend to the teenager?
9. Why should the initiative in building friendship come from parents, not from the teenager?
10. Why is it important, when necessary, to be able to admit that you're "not doing well at being a friend"?
11. Why does reading a teenager's correspondence without permission destroy trust?
12. Is "one-on-one" communication with a teenager necessary? What is its value?
13. How can parental "know-it-all" attitude interfere with building friendly relationships?
14. Should your friend feel loved?

Show Your Friends Jesus

A teenager is not an enemy of parents, but a potential friend who is designed by God to become such in the times of the concluding events of sinful earth's history. We read the very last verses of the Old Testament from Malachi 4:5-6: "See, I will send the prophet Elijah to you before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes. He will turn the hearts of the parents to their children, and the hearts of the children to their parents; or else I will come and strike the land with total destruction."

I believe that the material you are now reading is the fulfillment of this promise for the last days, which the Bible describes thus: "But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God—having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with such people" (2 Timothy 3:1-5). Which of the above verses is being fulfilled in your family? As a rule, until 11-12 years old children have a compliant character, and parents hold power over their children, thinking that this will continue forever. But the child grows, and at some point he understands that he is no longer a child, and he wants to be more adult, responsible, independent and no longer return to childhood. And this is the most normal desire at this age, but parents are not ready for such a turn of events and they want to continue managing their children.

Unfortunately, the world offers its own model of transition to adulthood: Drink like adults; smoke like adults; enjoy yourself like adults and don't think about consequences. The enemy of the soul has blinded the minds of teenagers, luring naive and curious souls into his nets, and parents lose control over their children and don't know what to do.

It's also important to notice that our world "...has become a dwelling for demons and a haunt for every impure spirit, a haunt for every unclean bird..." (Revelation 18:2). We are

dealing not only with sinful people, but also wage war with the world of spirits who have influence on both parents and their children.

It would be naive to suppose that human strength and knowledge will be sufficient to keep a growing child away from all kinds of dangers and make him a worthy person among the raging stream of evil. The enemy of the soul has one goal—to keep human consciousness from faith in Christ. And what this person will be like no longer matters to Satan, but for entertainment he brings down on young people's lives all kinds of temptations and enticements and desires to deprive them of life as early as possible or spoil it forever.

How can parents resist all this evil and influence? Only through personal faith in Christ and their love in every matter. Jesus desires that father and mother reflect His image in their thoughts, feelings, and deeds. That they pray for their children and be friends to them. There is no greater blessing for children than having believing parents who are also friends to their children and love each other from a pure heart.

Being a friend to your teenager means understanding what is happening in the growing body and mind; it means accepting any changes in influence and education and adapting to them; it means always being nearby; it means understanding his needs and desires; it means not judging but helping; it means treating him as Christ treats you.

Jesus desires that we in our life show Christ to all our neighbors through all our behavior. That our spirit be filled with God's Spirit, that our motives be moved by Christ's love, our words carry God's light and give others hope for a better life.

Showing your children Christ is not very difficult when He lives in your heart and has close communion with you. But it's worth always remembering that loving a teenager and being his friend is a choice of parents that they can make every morning of a new day and during every difficult trial that may come from where it wasn't expected.

Jesus likes to manifest himself in works of love, happiness, and friendliness. He transmits this spirit through us to other people and has a beneficial influence on the hearts of those whom we decided to love.

If you don't have this love, then it can be acquired from Him who offers it in the form of gold refined by fire from Revelation 3:18. By becoming friends with your children and dealing with them in love and friendship, you show them the true image of Christ, and they too will want to be in union with such a beautiful Heavenly Friend.

Jesus is always near, He knows how to listen without interrupting, He doesn't argue but doesn't change truth for the sake of peace, He will always help when asked about it, He cares for our needs and protects us from evil without violating the right to our choice. He loves at all times and quickly appears in times of misfortune. He is honest and open in His friendship, constant and caring, gentle in attitude and firm in principles. He contains in Himself the full completeness of what every thirsting human soul needs. And all these qualities of His soul He desires to develop in His children. It won't be difficult for us to treat our teenagers as Jesus treats us, if we understand this and see it from relationships with Him. To treat others as Jesus treats you—this is a Biblical principle.

It's such happiness—to share Jesus and His love with your children, to make someone happy and bring to Christ those whom He brings to you.

In Christ's statement: "Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline" from Revelation 3:19, the word "love" sounds in the original as "phileo," which means friend's love. He is not just a Loving Creator, but also a Loving Friend to everyone who believes in Him and has close relationships with Him, keeping everything that He advises and commands us.

Do you want to see in your family the fulfillment of the prophecy from Malachi 4:5-6? Then become friends with your children and show them Jesus through your attitude.

Don't be afraid that you won't be understood or accepted at first. In some cases this is a long process. Your love and friendship are needed by your children at any age. Be constant in love and friendship, as God is constant in the gift of sun and rain, and you will have success.

We are given a commandment that we, believing in Christ, should witness about Him to all nations. And the very first nation that should hear, see, and touch this message is our children. Don't forget also that you and your spouse are also someone's children, and your hearts should be turned to your fathers, as the Lord commanded.

Only a loving friend whose heart is constantly nourished from Heavenly sources and who constantly seeks new ways for all his neighbors to be happy can correctly show children Christ.

If your parents didn't give you such an example, and your spouse has the image of another master, then you still be a friend and represent to your children Him who gave His life for you. The Lord knows the time for each of them to save them too, and will actively use you for victory over all selfishness.

Parents' prayers for their children always stand in priority, and the Lord accomplishes much in teenagers' lives at their parents' requests. And how joyful it will be to say to God: "Here am I and my children whom You entrusted to me!"

Questions for Reflection

1. Please read John 15:15; Philippians 2:5; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Proverbs 4:1-2; Matthew 18:12-14; Isaiah 8:18; 38:19; 54:13; Hebrews 2:13; Ephesians 4:15; Romans 12:10; Acts 2:17, in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your memory?
3. What was revealed to you in this chapter?
4. Why is a teenager often perceived as an "enemy" of parents, and how to change this perspective?
5. How to distinguish a teenager's healthy striving for independence from the influence of worldly values?
6. How can parents reflect Christ's image in everyday interactions with children?

7. What does "turning the hearts of fathers to children and hearts of children to fathers" mean in the context of the last time?
8. What qualities of Jesus' friendship should be an example for parents in relationships with teenagers?
9. How to find balance between firmness in principles and gentleness in relationships, as Christ does?
10. Why is it important that parents not only talk about Christ, but also show Him through their behavior?
11. Why is it important to respect a teenager's choice, even when it seems wrong?
12. Why is it important for parents to acknowledge their mistakes before children?
13. Why is it important for parents to renew their decision to be friends with their children every day?
14. What does it mean to say at the end of life: "Here am I and my children," and what is the spiritual value of this statement?

How to Listen to a Teenager

Teenagers are very sensitive to their parents and understand who they're dealing with. If your teenager was previously communicative but suddenly became silent and reluctant to share something with you, then don't look for the reason in him, it most likely lies hidden in the parents. Analyze your heart and how you reacted to his stories, what you answered him, and what spirit was present in your communication.

If you interrupt, start giving advice when it's not needed, answer without listening to the end, devalue feelings, express sarcasm, use what you heard later against the storyteller, mock what's important or don't show interest, then don't be surprised that you start being ignored or they become very stingy in communication with you.

And if the teenager's love language is communication and he avoids you in this matter, then you need to reconsider your attitude and in prayer ask God to show you your problem that closes the teenager's heart.

It's not difficult for a young person to close himself off from those who bring discomfort or wound an open soul. Closing of the heart doesn't happen all at once. Parents, as a rule, are accustomed to being leaders and don't monitor themselves and their speech, considering themselves right and wise, and small children also get used to this. But during the teenage period the child's thinking changes along with hormonal processes, and he begins to notice many things in relationships that didn't concern him before, and react to them. And instead of looking for the problem in themselves, parents attribute everything to teenage rebellion and declare war, the nature and causes of which they don't understand.

The ability to listen is an art of love. It doesn't come spontaneously and doesn't appear from nothing. And if you consider the high cost of time or its absence for close people, then the ability to listen is also a victory over yourself, it's the voice of the heart saying: "You are very dear, needed, and

important to me. I'm very interested in what you're telling me. I'm ready to listen and understand you and your needs." Love knows how to speak without words, it knows how to listen expressively and act with love, taking into account what was heard. When a teenager sees this, then he begins to speak and open up, observing how far he can let his listener go.

Each of your words, your reaction and intonation have a certain influence and create an atmosphere of trust or caution.

If you really understand that you want to listen to the teenager, then you need to stop for this. Put aside or turn off your phone, take earphones out of your ears, leave all your affairs, look into the eyes (if you're not driving), listen attentively and to the end of the story.

Principles are offered here, but in each case they should proceed from the existing situation and different circumstances, consider these advice not as a rule for all cases.

If your teenager is talkative, this doesn't mean that everything is wonderful in your relationships. You can talk a lot and about nothing, about everything, but about emptiness. And any attempt to enter the heart and find out what it lives by will be met with hostility and transferred to another channel. Try to understand what depth you're at in your communication.

If there are no conversations at all on any topics, then don't impose your communication, but first pray about how to build this bridge and what you need to change in yourself.

The reason for the teenager's silence can also be sin that he commits but doesn't want to tell about, or some wound that you caused him carelessly. Your openness, desire for change, sincerity in repentance, and friendliness will help establish the true causes of alienation and begin building something new and solid. Sometimes your interested and expressive presence nearby without words can tell more than ridiculous justifications.

It can be very difficult for an adult person to change his habits and manners in communication. But in relationships with a

teenager you need to reconsider these manners and remove from your heart what can destroy emotional connections with the teenager and lead communication into a dead end.

The art of communicating with a teenager is a whole science that requires many parents to make many changes in life and thinking. And pride is not a very good teacher for authoritarian parents.

There are mistakes in relationships that kill teenagers' desire to open their hearts:

- Arrogance, intimidation, or dictatorship of parents;
- Criticism and humiliation instead of sympathy;
- Mocking what was heard, irony, or sarcasm;
- Comparing with yourself in the form of reproach: "I didn't think like that at your age!";
- Discussing intimate conversations with other people;
- Comparing with other children;
- Panic or fear from what was heard;
- Rudeness or harshness in answers;
- Condemning mistakes;
- Absence of time, attention, or interest in communication;
- Reading morals or preaching instead of dialogue;
- Manipulation or pressure when he doesn't want to tell something;
- Demanding a report;
- Devaluing the teenager's dreams or plans;
- Attempts to impose your opinion;
- Suspicion and intolerance of dissent;
- Ignoring feelings and experiences or accusing of weakness;
- Parents' inability to control their negative emotions and feelings or sharp mood changes not in a positive direction;
- Desire to always be right;
- Refusing to discuss topics that are complex and important for the teenager. For example: falling in love, meaning of life, self-determination;
- Parents' unwillingness to communicate.

To build wonderful relationships, trusting communication, and have genuine mutual joy from personal presence, years of

painstaking work and prayers for wisdom in building these relationships are needed. And this can be destroyed very quickly, simply by showing ignorance or stupidity where attentiveness and wisdom should be.

There's a proverb: "Speech is silver, but silence is gold." And in both cases wisdom from above is needed when communicating with a teenager. What suits a daughter may not suit a son, and vice versa.

Blessed are those parents whom their maturing children consider friends and are ready to share their secrets with them, and this is not an accident or luck, but conscious building of such relationships throughout life.

If you don't have this, it's never too late to start. Acknowledge your mistakes and begin new construction with yourself. Ruins cannot be restored in one day, changes for the better don't happen in moments. If trust was lost, then much time is needed to acquire it again. Only you should understand whether this is within your power or you need God's help? And without Him we can do nothing.

Set aside special time for communication so that no one is rushing anywhere. Value this time and thank your teenager for the trust shown to you after each communication. Express your joy from the blessing of communication and look for opportunities to learn even more.

Remember also that if communication is not the love language for your teenager, then his silence doesn't necessarily mean alienation. Study his interests and give what is dear to his heart. And may all your words, motives, and actions be seasoned with the salt of love, desirable and tasty at all times.

Questions for Reflection

1. Please read James 1:19; 3:17; 4:6; Proverbs 10:19; 15:1; 16:24; 17:27; 18:13; 25:11; Ecclesiastes 3:7; Colossians 3:21; 4:6; Ephesians 4:29; 6:4; Matthew 7:3-5; Philippians 2:3; Romans 12:10, in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your memory?

3. What was revealed to you in this chapter?
4. How can parents determine if they have problems in communication with their teenager?
5. What other parental mistakes most often push teenagers away from communication?
6. What role do your intonation and facial expression play in conversation with a teenager?
7. How can pride destroy relationships with a teenager?
8. What habits do parents need to change to establish communication?
9. How to distinguish empty chatter from sincere opening of the heart?
10. How can parents learn to control their emotions in conversation?
11. How to express to a teenager that his feelings are important to you?
12. What topics are especially important to discuss with a teenager without judgment?
13. What does it give a teenager to realize that he is understood and accepted?
14. What will happen if parents put themselves above their teenagers?

Sensuality

Sensuality is any unlawful passionate attraction to carnal and sinful pleasures, to satisfaction of sexual desire, excessive sensuality that contradicts God's principles and turns the soul away from God. Sensuality can manifest itself in such spheres: thoughts and imagination about intimate closeness; desire to receive caresses and attention from the opposite sex; striving for physical closeness outside marriage; sensual pleasures through masturbation; viewing and reading erotic content of sinful nature; displaying one's body through indecent clothing; seeking sensual pleasures even in spiritual things, such as singing, prayers, and "baptism with the spirit"; unhealthy striving for laziness, comfort, and pleasure in eating. This is not only lustful attraction to something, but also distorted love for pleasures.

A teenager in his growth experiences new feelings that are unfamiliar to him, and he doesn't know what to do with them. And if none of his parents explains what this is and how he should behave, then the enemy of the soul sends obsessive thoughts with which the young soul cannot cope with human efforts in the absence of proper knowledge.

Hormonal changes and related sensations are not something sinful and frightening. This process is designed by God at a time determined by Him and carries hidden blessings for personality growth and transition of consciousness from childhood to adult life. God also designed that all these sensual lower powers should be under the control of reason, consciousness, and will and be restrained within certain frameworks of behavior. When these feelings get out of control of the higher powers of the soul, then they begin to dominate in life and control actions.

In the teenager's body and mind there is a struggle about which it is written in Galatians 5:17: "For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want." And if he doesn't understand what is

happening to him, then the flesh will win victory after victory until it gains complete power over a person's will and conscience.

Sensuality, though pleasant in its representation and gives the teenager sensual pleasures, doesn't carry happiness in itself, doesn't give peace in the heart, but is a hidden rebellion against God's law and brings pangs of conscience and various mental disorders. God didn't create man so that he would be happy in sin and have peace while violating God's principles. Loss of purity of principles and heart is transmitted to adult life and manifests itself later in not a very good form for all with whom the corrupted person will live.

Hormones intensify the teenager's reaction to external stimuli, such as intimate images, gentle touches, affectionate words. And our world has made all kinds of sinful stimuli so accessible that an attack on any person's mind is carried out from all sides. All kinds of gadgets have become a source of all evil, mixing good and sinful in themselves.

The teenager has no knowledge, experience, and understanding of how dangerous the sin of sensuality is, and if there are no wise mentors in his life, then the world will offer its own model of behavior. Parents' task includes the obligation to outpace the world and enlighten the teenager in all spheres of the listed temptations, explain the nature of these images, explain how God looks at this, what the Bible says, and how to resist this.

It's necessary to consider the fact that in the parents' childhood there was no such progress of information flow, and such information could be found only in suspicious places, but today in many countries corruption of minors has become a state program that children are obligated to go through in all schools. And parents need to actively resist this evil through personal conversations with their children and through personal example of obedience to God's principles.

The teenager's culture and environment encourage any sinful lifestyle, and many media teach him that only adults can sin, and if he wants to become such, then he should try it himself.

The image of a real man has been reduced to dog-like behavior, teaching that if a boy has sexual experience, then this makes him a man, but they don't say that a real man takes responsibility and is ready to bear the consequences of his choice.

The opposite sex is presented to teenagers not as God's creation that needs to be studied, known in the joy of heartfelt friendship and purity of relationships, but as an object for satisfying their passions and desires, which can be changed like gloves, considering only their own pleasures.

Sensuality forms carnal consciousness in the superiority of bodily and sensual pleasures over spiritual values, it makes a person spiritually blind and weak and opens doors for more serious sins that destroy soul and body. Such a soul is defiled and cannot abide in God's presence.

Inaction and ignorance of parents allow the enemy of the soul to catch inexperienced and trusting souls in his nets, and those who once stumbled on satanic temptations but then decided to go the straight path, the enemy of the soul tries to torment through pangs of conscience for mistakes made.

Offering Adam's wife the forbidden fruit, the tempter didn't tell about the consequences of this choice, but presented everything as "good for food, pleasing to the eyes, and desirable because it gives knowledge," and young people take these fruits and eat, and also give to their friends, and they eat. But eyes open after this not in many.

Secular society has taken care that sin be beautifully decorated and easily accessible at any level. Hollywood and worldly writers make their harmful contribution to the art of corrupting minds. Programmers create programs to take time from teenagers and give them emptiness. And governments of many Western countries issue laws obligating children to study shameful abominations in schools and persecute those who try to resist this. But the Bible boldly opposes sensuality and calls this sin and works of the flesh, declaring that those who do such things will not inherit the Kingdom of God.

Children and teenagers whom parents bring to Christ and from childhood teach to distinguish good from evil are under God's protection, and the enemy doesn't touch them. Enlightenment in the intimate sphere and explanation of why sin is so dangerous teaches the teenager that all kinds of sensual experiences will take place in their life, but when all this is under the control of reason and allowed at the proper time, then this is something beautiful that will gladden the heart all life, if used for its purpose and according to law.

Sports activities, physical labor, research of fascinating things, and other useful activities distract teenagers' consciousness from many temptations and fill their life with special meaning. Satan will always find something to occupy an idler with. The environment in which your teenager finds himself also has influence for good or evil. The teenage period is the time when you need to begin enlightening your children in all these questions. But if parents themselves live according to the flesh, then what can they give to their children?

Questions for Reflection

1. Please read Galatians 5:16-17; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5; Proverbs 5:3-5; 7:21-23; Job 31:1; 2 Timothy 2:22; 1 John 2:16; Romans 13:13-14; Matthew 5:28; 1 Corinthians 6:18-20, in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your memory?
3. What was revealed to you in this chapter?
4. What is sensuality?
5. How to distinguish normal feelings of a maturing teenager from sinful inclinations?
6. What does the Bible say about control over one's desires and feelings?
7. How can a thought grow into sin?
8. Why does conscience begin to torment a person after the sin of sensuality?
9. What lie does Satan instill in teenagers about sensuality?
10. Why can't a person be happy in sin?
11. How should parents properly speak with teenagers on intimate topics?

12. How does sensuality differ from real love?
13. What to do if a teenager has already fallen into dependence on sensual actions?
14. What happens in a teenager's soul if no one enlightens him in this sphere?

The Power of Persuasion

Many parents are so convinced that it's impossible to communicate with their teenagers about anything, let alone instruct them in something, that they don't even try to do anything in this direction, hoping for a miracle that their young creation will somehow come to its senses and become wiser on its own. And by 18 years old they get what was formed under the influence of everything the teenager surrounded himself with. But God has a different plan regarding the raising of our children, and He is interested in parents learning this science and not giving up when some difficulties arise in relationships.

If you had wonderful relationships in your family, but during the teenage period some kind of split occurred, then there is a reason for this that needs to be determined and steps taken to adapt to the new situation.

The Bible gives many recommendations for raising children, and all these counsels and commandments have the power of persuasion when parents persistently follow God's light and do everything possible so that their children are raised in the fear of God and love for people.

Let's take an example from the world: Until what age do young people study in order to then find their place in life? Until the age of majority, and some manage to learn all kinds of sciences until 25 years old and receive a doctoral degree. Teenagers are young people who are learning something, seeking their place under the sun, learning all the delights of new life, and are not yet burdened by many problems of adult life. But some parents think that their children have gotten out of hand and there's no more control over them. But this is not so. If young people encounter wise mentors, then they gladly learn life wisdom from them and adopt much from their experience for themselves.

Remember your youth. At this age each of us had our own authorities, favorite teachers and mentors, and some wise

expressions heard in passing became the motto of our entire life and helped not to lose heart in hours of trials.

Words of the wise, spoken in time and in the right spirit, have enormous persuasive power and are capable of forming good habits and worthy character in listeners at any age.

The peculiarity of the teenage period is that young hearts are open to learning about the world and spiritual values. Teenagers seek answers to all their "whys," and God desires to use older people so they can instruct young people at the beginning of their path.

Even if it seems to you that nothing interests the teenager except his smartphone, know that this is not so. It's just that the key of your instructions doesn't fit the lock of his heart, and he's trying to fill his thirsting vessel this way.

As a rule, in many educational institutions students are forbidden to use smartphones under threat of confiscation or expulsion in case of disobedience. And students comply with these requirements and learn what is offered to them. This means the problem is not in temptation, but in a wise approach to the given problem.

Parents have much more authority than any teacher and can establish any order on their territory. But how wise and correct this will be can be seen by their children's reaction.

Just as at birth parents were given a clean sheet of the child's character into which they wrote the story of their love, so in the teenage years many unwritten pages remain that require new ink, a new pen, and special wisdom from above.

"Faith comes from hearing," and discipline comes from instruction. What parents should not do is stop communicating with their teenager if they understand that there is no agreement and unity in relationships. This means the old model of upbringing has passed and a new one needs to be sought. Who knows their child better than parents? They have authority from God and can have the most convincing influence on the growing generation in union with the Creator.

Remember that all your wise instructions, spoken at the right time, in the spirit of love and friendship, have enormous persuasive power. And the higher your authority in the teenager's eyes, the more convincing your words and instructions will sound. Children don't have omniscience, and the very first opinion that convinced them becomes their opinion for life. But you should also be honest in your children's eyes and not be afraid to acknowledge your mistakes if such occur.

God loves to answer the prayers of His children and give them what they ask for themselves, and when you pray for your children, then God's power deals with the free will of the teenager, who can say "no" and not accept what the Lord will offer to his soul at your request. Therefore teach children to pray themselves about their needs and believe that the Lord hears and answers. Do everything possible so that your children find a Friend in Christ and learn to build personal trusting relationships with Him themselves. This will be the most important and valuable investment in their life and will give them a wonderful future and hope.

Remember that God doesn't address the world with His obvious voice, but He uses the speech of His children so that through their mouths and His Spirit He convinces listeners of truth. And the Lord desires that parents correctly represent God to their teenagers, that their words don't diverge from deeds, that they live as they teach. He desires that parents be gentle in their persistence, not dominating over the teenager's will, but calling to good behavior through kind attitude.

The power of persuasion doesn't always manifest itself in wise instructions, but it's strong also in the ability to listen, in the ability to ask right questions, in the ability to understand a person's heart and his need.

The teenager won't remember everything you tell him, but he will never forget what he felt in communication with you. Your respect, admiration for him, honoring him as an equal is transmitted on the level of feelings and is a good convincing factor in application to your words.

Sometimes gentle touches, friendly handshakes, heartfelt embraces say more than all your beautiful and correct words.

Someone said: "Constantly tell children about Christ, and sometimes you can do this with words."

Remember that all your kind attitude, friendly spirit, accepting the young person as he is, has enormous influence on his consciousness and helps solve many complex questions. We don't know when and how many times our kind words saved someone's soul from destruction and a wrong step. Or how our smile and expression of trust supported hands in a moment of despair.

It's also worth taking into account that your teenager's friends may have bad relationships with their parents, but in you find a wise mentor who will show them God's love in practice, help them gain confidence, and give hope.

If, by God's mercy, you have the honor of being a teacher for many young people, then know that your influence and power of persuasion in wise instructions will help them avoid many mistakes and make your life and principles of love and friendship an example for imitation.

Just as there were many people in your life who influenced you, so you can become a convincing force for many and influence good changes in someone's life, and especially in the life of your teenagers.

Questions for Reflection

1. Please read Ecclesiastes 12:11; Proverbs 1:8-9; 10:21; 16:24; 19:20; 22:6; 25:11; Deuteronomy 6:6-7; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Titus 2:6-7; Psalm 119:9; Colossians 4:6; Isaiah 50:4, in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your memory?
3. What was revealed to you in this chapter?
4. What is the power of persuasion and how does it work?
5. What is the difference between human persuasion and persuasion that comes from the Holy Spirit?

6. Why does the first persuasion about something become a person's personal opinion? Should this be considered in the upbringing process?
7. How does the imperfection or insincerity of father or mother affect the power of their persuasions?
8. How should a parent live so that his words have the power of persuasion?
9. What mistakes most often reduce the power of parental influence?
10. Why is it important not to lose hope and reconsider your behavior if the teenager distances himself?
11. Why is it important to teach a teenager to distinguish God's voice from the opinion of the crowd?
12. Why is sometimes a simple embrace stronger than any sermon?
13. How to use questions instead of statements for persuasion?
14. Can parents be mentors not only to their children, but also to their children's friends?

Confronting Sensuality

Our teenager is not a problem of the current time that suddenly appeared in our house out of nowhere, but a ready product of those blessings, knowledge, and experiences that we have gathered in the heart of this person up to this time. This is our son or our daughter, who have become what we have molded them into.

A teenager is a very wise creation who possesses a thirst for knowledge, strength for life, the ability to adapt to any conditions, sensitivity in understanding parents' moods, as well as curiosity in studying everything new and interesting. This is not at all a foolish being—they have a flexible mind and amazing resourcefulness in many matters.

The power of parents' conviction, their authority and consistency in personal example form a certain type of thinking and culture accepted in this house. They say that the apple doesn't fall far from the tree—and this can be seen in our children.

But the teenage period is the most tempting time for the dark forces of evil, and they, in alliance with ungodly people, create all kinds of programs and temptations to corrupt trusting teenagers so that their life would roll downhill. Satan doesn't disdain anything that can destroy a person's soul and body. His traps are set everywhere to capture fearful and inexperienced young people in strong nets of sin and vice.

God gave parents authority to raise their children, as well as to form spiritual values, tastes, and views in young minds. Christ won the war against the forces of evil. He was not tempted by any sin, did not become a victim of the strongest temptation, but being a teenager, He kept Himself in purity and holiness. And He knows what youth faces, and what is needed to resist all evil and not touch the unclean.

Of course, it's best to defeat sin even before it appears in a teenager's life. Through trusting conversations and instructions in truth, many temptations appear before children in all their

terrible reality and shock their hearts with the heavy consequences that sin brings. The enemy of the soul hides these facts; he speaks only about pleasure, enjoyment, and "momentary" joy from the first act of temptation. And young people swallow this bait, deciding to try sin to taste.

When I was studying in third grade, one teacher came to our lesson and showed slides about the harm of smoking and about what terrible diseases and death this habit brings. I was shocked and immediately began to dissuade all the smokers I knew to quit this business. And during my teenage period, I fell into bad company where everyone smoked except me. But I was afraid to try this nastiness because I knew about the heavy consequences and didn't want to get sick and die prematurely. To this day, this conviction about the harm of smoking helps me not even look in that direction, and personal acquaintance with Jesus in my young years and the influence of biblical truths saved me from other evils as well.

The life and relationships of parents with each other and with all household members is the strongest example that children see, and it has a profound influence on them. Live as you teach, and teach as you live. But with the presence of a living example, there should also be wise words spoken on time and on topic.

For example: when your teenage son falls in love, and his girlfriend is not of very strict rules, not all your instructions will be heard, as hormonal experiences cloud common sense. The young man simply hears nothing except his "wants" and confidence that he has found true love, and parents understand nothing.

But serious conversations before all these events, stories about experiences of deceived teenagers, descriptions of the dangers of venereal diseases—all this can prepare a young heart for correct relationships and protect from suspicious people.

The presence of sincere love of parents toward the teenager in relationships and constant speaking with him in his love language will preserve him from seeking this love in other

people. A loved person has protection and doesn't thirst for its manifestations from strangers.

Biblical instructions, good and bad examples from the lives of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, David, Solomon, and other characters also lay a solid foundation in consciousness.

Memorized texts about the harm of various temptations will be reminded by God at the right time. When there is understanding of the purity and holiness of the body, knowledge of how to keep oneself from evil—the enemy of the soul will have no place in the teenager's life.

Reading and discussing useful books about building a happy family and good family relationships will also make an invaluable contribution to confronting this world.

It's important that the father often talks with his son, and the mother with her daughter, about hormonal changes in the body, about the feelings this causes, and about possible temptations. Trust in this sphere, as well as your awareness and omniscience, will help the teenager open up and share intimate feelings and thoughts.

When active puberty occurs, it's necessary to seriously talk with the teenager about the harm of masturbation and about the heavy physiological and spiritual consequences of this vice. When the teenager understands that you understand his feelings and know what he's going through, but at the same time don't condemn him but want to help overcome these temptations—then your instructions and prayers will be useful to him. Let him know that you are a friend given to him by God.

The intimate sphere of life will always be attractive to both young men and young women. And the easy accessibility of corrupting information can destroy many good plantings in the teenager's heart. Parents need to get ahead of the world in this education—teach children to turn off the screen in time and look away from indecent images and scenes. Explain how you yourself do this, and show that your family is happy precisely because it chose God's way, rejecting the world's temptations.

Prohibitions are useful at an early age, but in the teenage period they are ineffective. When a person is convinced of the harm of something and understands the benefit of certain restrictions, it's easier for him to cope with the raging fire inside himself and say "no" to sin when circumstances require it.

Stories about your personal falls should not teach teenagers evil. You are for them—even at a young age—an example that is very contagious.

Sports activities, interesting studies, and useful physical labor help redirect tireless energy into the right and useful channel. Achieving success, the teenager feels like a full-fledged person. Sports exercises with even load contribute to the formation of a beautiful, firm, elastic, and healthy body, which will never be superfluous in subsequent years.

If the teenager fell under the onslaught of temptations and confessed it—don't "beat" him with mockery, don't tell others and don't reproach, but lead him to Christ, Who can give strength for victory and teach not to appear where sin reigns.

Jesus resisted all temptations thanks to knowledge of the Scriptures—this was His main weapon of victory. The same thing will give God's Word to our children if they are taught these truths from early years and throughout the entire teenage period.

Questions for Reflection

1. Please read Matt. 7:12; 18:7; Prov. 22:6; Ps. 119:9; James 2:12; 1 John 2:6; 4:17; 2 Tim. 2:22; Heb. 12:6-11; Gal. 6:1; 1 Tim. 4:12; 1 Pet. 5:2-3, in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What was revealed to you in this chapter?
4. Is it important to understand that a teenager is not a foolish being, but a thirsting soul?
5. Why does Satan particularly actively hunt young souls?
6. Why is it important for parents to act ahead of time rather than wait for falls?

7. Why is the power of parents' conviction more important than simple prohibitions?
8. Why can trusting conversations prevent serious falls into sin?
9. How to tell children about others' falls without awakening curiosity about sin in them?
10. Why is it important to speak with a teenager "in his love language"?
11. Why should the father talk with his son, and the mother with her daughter, and what should such conversations be about?
12. How to teach a child to look away from indecency?
13. Why shouldn't one mock or reproach if a teenager sinned and confessed it to you?
14. Why is teaching God's Word from childhood the most powerful protection in teenage years?

A Conversation with a Son About Sensuality

If for some reason you live in a country whose language is not your native language, you need to decide which language you will communicate with your children in. Children will quickly learn any language and will speak it without any problems, but your native language may only be accepted in your home. For the child to understand everything you tell him and be able to correctly and competently express his thoughts in this language, he needs a large vocabulary and long practice in using these words. This is important to know and understand for those parents who emigrated to another country and do not plan to return to their homeland.

While children are small, not so many words are needed to communicate with them, and their logical thinking will develop within the vocabulary that they have mastered by this time. But in communicating with a teenager, much more sophisticated words, speech patterns, and expressive expressions are required so that they are understood, accepted, and touch the heart. You must understand what your teenager lives by, what interests him, and what he talks about. The time comes when you need not just to give valuable instructions, but also to conduct heartfelt, trusting conversations on any topics.

The topic of the harm of sensuality should also arise in your communication and be considered comprehensively. This is not a one-time conversation about what is good and what is bad, but prolonged conversations about real dangers that surround young people from all sides and will necessarily strive to penetrate your teenager's mind.

A conversation with a son differs significantly from a conversation with a daughter—taking into account some delicate topics that are customary to discuss between a young man and a man, and between a girl and a woman. Although there are many common basic principles in these matters as well.

In conversation with a son, it's important for the father to consider the teenager's age and understand what physiological and spiritual processes are occurring in the young organism. For each age there is its own topic, and one shouldn't get ahead of events, introducing the young man's consciousness to a world of feelings and emotions incomprehensible to him. However, it's necessary to manage to get ahead of the world—before temptations begin to attack the young mind.

Concepts about shame and chastity, about differences between boys and girls should be laid from an early age so that children understand that clothing protects not only from heat and cold, but also from lustful glances. And starting from 9-10 years old, it's necessary to introduce the child to the world of more intimate topics in a respectful and gentle tone, explaining that God created man and woman not for sin, but for pure relationships in love and holiness. That sexual attraction is God's gift, intended as a blessing for creating a family, and that it reveals the beauty of these relationships only in marriage with a beloved woman.

It's worth giving the example of the story after Adam and Eve's fall: how they understood that they were naked and became ashamed. That sensuality is sin and an attempt to receive sensual pleasure contrary to God's ordinances. That physiological changes will soon begin to occur in the son's organism, and he will begin to look differently at girls who now may seem to him like enemies or unbearable creatures. It's also important to explain that the world offers many indecent pictures and photographs capable of destroying life, while God wants children to guard their hearts.

At the age of 12-14 years, it's necessary to communicate with the son in a respectful tone, inviting him to frank and trusting conversations, explaining that the new feelings and attractions that are awakening in him are God's gift. That nocturnal emissions are a normal phenomenon and a sign that the organism is developing according to laws established by God, and that he is no longer a child but is becoming a man who has much to understand and experience. That a woman is not an

object for lustful thoughts and connections, but a living soul and personality given to man for love and care within the framework of marital union. It's important to pay attention to the danger of pornography and the destructive influence it has on the mind, body, and will.

It's also worth talking about the harm of masturbation and the heavy consequences that this sin causes on physiological and emotional levels. The teenager can be told about medical studies of the brains of people dependent on pornography and about the damage this inflicts on the mind.

One can give the example of fire: when it's in the fireplace and under control—it warms and creates coziness, but when it goes beyond bounds—it destroys everything good and valuable in its path. It's also important to explain that a real man is one who knows how to control his desires, doesn't succumb to temptations, and knows how to say "no" to sin when it knocks on consciousness in various forms.

It's important to convey to the teenager at this age that you, his father or mentor, are not a judge but a friend who will help cope with any attractions and support in any struggle. That together you can find a way out of any difficulty and correct any mistake.

At the age of 15-16 years, conversations should be conducted as with an equal, respected person—in the trusting spirit of a friend who loves at all times.

You can share your victories over temptations in the intimate sphere, tell how falls and dependence on pornography destroy the happiness of future families. That chastity is not weakness and not a relic of the past, but strength and victory over the world of temptations.

Young people at this age already know a lot but are not yet informed about the sad consequences of violating God's principles. It's important to instill the fear of God, which is the beginning of wisdom and strength for victory in any sphere of temptations.

It's important to convey that a real man is not one who has had sexual experience with anyone, but one who understands his purpose and takes responsibility for the happiness and well-being of the chosen woman. That any intimate connections are beautiful only within the framework of lawful marriage, where he and she have agreed to care for each other and love each other to the end of life.

It's worth noting that even lawful marriage is not the goal and not the meaning of life, but for entering into it, it's important to preserve purity of body and thoughts.

The example of Amnon and Tamar from 2 Samuel 13 shows all the destructiveness of extramarital relationships and how much pain and grief this brings to loved ones.

It's important to convey the thought that men who follow after lust lose their mind, reason, and right to eternal life.

At 17-18 years old, you are dealing with an adult son who has already understood and experienced much. Treat him as a brother in faith, as an equal man. Respect his opinion and choice. The topic of conversations can be reflections that sensuality is a counterfeit having nothing in common with true love. That love values purity, thinks about another's happiness, and knows how to answer for its desires. That a girl is not a body and not an object for satisfying passion, but a soul needing love, friendship, care, and correct relationships. That a woman is the image and likeness of God, with a different nature of perceiving the world, and one of them can become a gift from the Lord and gladden the heart throughout life.

A man is a protector, not a consumer; this is God's image, not the likeness of Satan; this is a brave person ready to take much upon himself.

Questions for Reflection

1. Please read Matt. 5:8,28; 2 Tim. 2:22; 1 Thess. 4:3; 1 Cor. 6:12-20; Heb. 13:4; 1 John 2:16-17; Rom. 6:13-14; Prov. 4:23; Eph. 5:3; Gal. 5:16, in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?

3. What was revealed to you in this chapter?
4. Is it necessary to talk with children about the harm of sensuality?
5. What signs in a teenager's behavior might indicate that it's time to begin conversation about sensuality?
6. How to maintain trusting relationships with a son in the process of such conversations?
7. How to explain the value of chastity in a world where this is considered an outdated concept?
8. How to explain to a son the connection between respect for women and control over one's desires?
9. What should be the father's reaction if the son confesses to struggling with pornographic addiction?
10. How to reconcile biblical teaching about purity with modern concepts about relationships?
11. How to teach a son to distinguish true love from temporary attraction?
12. How to encourage a son to share his thoughts and questions on this topic?
13. What main mistakes do parents make when discussing the topic of sensuality?
14. What questions might arise in a teenager, and how to be prepared for them?

A Conversation with a Daughter About Sensuality

Sensuality is not two word combinations, but one word that in Russian means sweet passion. The very meaning of this word says that such lust is pleasant and desirable for the soul, like something sweet. And if you consider that behind all these temptations stands a whole army of evil spirits who try to lead a person into sin through thoughts and images, then you understand how serious everything is.

Conversations with a daughter about shame, about modesty, about her body, about clothing should begin from the earliest age when consciousness awakens in the child. Girls, as a rule, very quickly figure out what is decent and what is not, and firmly adhere to strict rules. And boys for them are those incomprehensible creatures with whom it's impossible to play with dolls and other games.

But in the teenage period, hormonal processes change many attitudes in the girl's consciousness, and she begins to feel attraction to the opposite sex, while the world's influence imposes all kinds of romantic images that she wants to experience in her life.

It's important for parents to get ahead of the world and create in their daughter's consciousness a correct understanding of what is happening to her, what influence this has, and what she needs to do, before the enemy of the soul gives this information.

A girl is a pearl that grows and matures for a very long time, but is very precious in her mystery, purity, and rarity, which the Lord did not intend for dogs or swine, but grows her so that at the right time He can give her to that person who will love her and care for her happiness. She is not merchandise for wide consumption, but a closed garden that will open its doors only to one chosen beloved (Song of Songs 4:12).

In conversation with a daughter, it's necessary to consider her age and maturity, level of perception, atmosphere of trust, and

emotional state. Her body is God's temple, which others should not treat disrespectfully.

Special attention should be paid to the fact that her figure from knees and elbows to neck should always be covered from outside view, as an exposed female body attracts unwanted glances and can be a temptation for many men.

At the age of 11-13 years, when the girl begins active puberty, the mother needs to introduce her daughter to all subsequent changes to free the child from unnecessary fears and worries. Parents should also explain to their daughter what changes in thinking will soon begin to overcome the mind and how to correctly recognize the enemy of the soul and resist him, having firm principles.

If it's better for the daughter to communicate with her mother or other experienced women on delicate topics, then in matters of morality, the father's opinion and advice will have special influence and significance for the growing girl. Who, if not a man, can better explain the male view and approach to women.

It's important for the girl to understand that new interest and attraction to boys is not sin, but a normal process of puberty, if it's not connected with immoral fantasies, touches, flirting, and desire to try the forbidden fruit.

All conversations on these topics should be conducted in a calm atmosphere, as equals, considering the daughter's interest and her desire to hear something new from you.

At the age of 14-16 years, the girl needs to be reminded of instructions that she should keep her purity until marriage and this is God's will. We must be honest and open and explain that the world offers its values that ruin life, bring diseases and mental anguish, and that sexual desires should not dictate behavior patterns, but everything should be under the control of reason.

It's important to note that watching "soap operas" or reading "romantic stories" present sin in a desirable form and sweep

away barriers in the mind, offering to taste what brings suffering and death.

It's also worth explaining that pressure from peers, their mockery of her purity, stories about romantic relationships of her friends and other attacks are Satan's attempts to knock her off the true path. Let her know that as dirty as all her experienced friends, she can become at any moment whenever she wants, but as pure as she is, they will never be able to become. And in this purity there is special strength and attractiveness.

Fornication and adultery are special sins that God placed in that category that He will personally judge those who commit them. We read in Hebrews 13:4: "Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge." The sin of fornication can take place not only in real action, but also in developing thoughts on this topic or in the company of a young man who tenderly touches the body or enchants consciousness with his kisses. Parents cannot forbid their daughter's communication with the opposite sex, but they can explain what boundaries need to be established and never allow them to be violated.

Sensuality is not some empty fascination, but an enchanted territory of the enemy of the soul, entering which, a person falls under satanic charms and sometimes cannot control his feelings and desires until he receives the coveted pleasure. Therefore, the girl should know that being alone with a pleasant young man can end very sadly, even against her will. Let all types of friendship be in sight of other people and under the protection of reason.

The goal of a girl as a woman is to become the wife of one husband, to be a mother, keeper of the home hearth, God's servant, and all pleasures and enjoyments will have a lawful place when they come into life in a lawful way. It's important to convey to the girl the truth that she is not merchandise, but a temple of the living God. That she is not a body, but a person.

At the age of 17-19 years, the girl already gains full independence, knows how to independently make important decisions, and feels like an adult person. Her body has formed and become suitable for full childbearing, and the age of majority allows her to legally enter marriage.

It should be noted that thoughts about sensuality come at any age, so parents should not relax and let their influence drift. In a trusting relationship, you can tell your experiences, stories of your mistakes and experiences. Pray together with your daughter for her future husband, teach her what her chosen one should be like and how to properly build relationships.

If the irreparable happens and your daughter tells you about her fall at any stage of growth, then put it on your heart not to beat her for it and not to push her away from you. Point her to the One who gave His life for her sins and is ready to accept and cleanse the young soul from all evil. However hard it may be for you to hear such confessions, be wise and ready not to finish off, but to help.

If something worse happens and your daughter consciously chooses the path of perdition, then you have the authority to pray for this soul until victory, and the Lord knows how to answer your prayers and at what time to bring her to repentance. He will not give the sinner happiness in sin, and your prayers will always be an obstacle on the path to final destruction.

The earlier you begin your conversations with your daughter about sensuality, the easier it will be for you to exert your influence in the future and win in every battle.

Questions for Reflection

1. Please read Matt. 7:6; 1 Cor. 6:18-20; 11:11-12; 2 Cor. 7:1; 11:2; 1 Thess. 4:3; Prov. 12:4; 20:15; 31:10; 1 Kings 15:12, in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What was revealed to you in this chapter?
4. Why is it important to start conversations with a daughter about modesty and shame from an early age?

5. What is the difference between the role of mother and father in the sexual education of a daughter?
6. How to explain to a daughter that natural attraction to the opposite sex is not sin, but those feelings that should be under control?
7. What arguments can be used when explaining to a daughter the importance of preserving purity until marriage?
8. Can a girl be a temptation to other men through her appearance and manner of behavior, even if she doesn't think about it?
9. How to explain to a teenager the spiritual consequences of not observing moral purity?
10. Why is it important in communication to pay special attention to images and thoughts, and not only physical actions?
11. In what way is it proposed to form in a girl a concept of her value not as an external object or merchandise, but as a person?
12. What approach is recommended for parents if the daughter reports her "fall" or extramarital pregnancy?
13. What to do if the daughter decided to go her own destructive way and doesn't want to have any communication?
14. Why is a different approach to the daughter necessary at different ages?

A Letter to a Silent Son

Sometimes something incomprehensible to parents begins to happen in a teenager's life, and all their knowledge and attempts to do something run into a deaf wall of silence, where there are no answers to all their questions. And the further life goes, the more this wall of separation grows.

It's difficult to determine the cause of such behavior in a teenager, as it can be many factors, starting from parenting mistakes to the influence of the world and peers, and all this against the backdrop of global hormonal changes in the child's organism.

Parents should remember that however closed their son may be, he has a heart that needs unconditional love, acceptance, and understanding of the teenager's needs. But when this heart is closed to living communication, then you shouldn't break into it, but it's better to try to find another way to convey information about your love.

Perhaps your son simply doesn't understand the love language you're trying to speak with him. And the love language he spoke in childhood no longer works, and parents need to seek new possibilities for how to open and prove their love. And fathers and mothers also need to understand themselves whether they have that love that their son so needs? Do they really love him, or does their innate egoism dictate its property rights, since they are his parents!

Fathers and mothers should understand and remember the simple truth that children don't experience feelings of deep gratitude for being born, for being fed and clothed, for being cared for and having money spent on them. This is accepted as a self-evident obligation, and parents are unlikely to hear praise addressed to them from other people if they start listing all their virtues regarding their children. They will see and receive all gratitude in their grandchildren.

One of the good and effective ways to address a teenage son's heart is writing him a letter. Although gadgets have pushed

such activity aside, it continues to have power and exerts proper influence where words and actions are powerless. A letter can be reread several times or set aside for better days, but reinforced by your prayers and invested love, it will most likely be read.

It's important that this message of love contains no reproaches, curses, accusations, or attacks, that it doesn't declare your power and authority and doesn't cause fear in the teenager. It's also worth considering the son's age and level of perception, his abilities and talents. The letter shouldn't contain falsehood and hypocrisy or impose your orders. Let this be a sincere attempt by father or mother to express their love and understanding of the son's needs. Spouses can write not one common letter, but each from themselves, expressing the male or female line of relationships and understanding of love.

At age 13, a teenager needs more warmth, acceptance, and sincerity. He's no longer a child, but not yet an adult either. At 15, the teenager needs to be shown respect, empathy, understanding of his difficulties, and faith that he will cope. And at 17, it's important to write as to an equal adult person, expressing trust, understanding of pain, giving confidence and admiration for his successes. And in each message, the teenager should understand that parents are nearby, that they love and are ready to participate in his life.

I'll give an example of how this letter should sound:

"My dear boy (or name is indicated),

I understand that you're experiencing interesting times now, and we don't manage to discuss many moments of our relationship in words, but I would like in this letter to open my soul and make you understand how dear you are to me and how I love you with all my heart. Perhaps it's difficult for you to talk with us now or there are experiences you don't want to tell us about, but let this be your secret, but know that if you think this doesn't concern us, then you're mistaken. We very much want to understand you, support you, and show our love in deed.

We understand that you now have many questions, many trials, that you don't like everything we do, but we ask you to understand that we act out of love for you, although we understand that we also make mistakes.

Although we are adults, we are also learning to live and be loving parents. We are not perfect parents and are ready to acknowledge our shortcomings and mistakes, and if you tell us what you don't like about our attitude toward you, then we will better understand your needs and your point of view.

We don't judge you for your mistakes, although we are sometimes overly strict. I understand what a teenager your age experiences because I was like that myself. It's pleasant for me to observe how you mature and become a man. I see in you much of who I was at your age, and I'm proud that you're more capable than I was, that you understand many electronic matters better than me. It's pleasant for me to see that you have your own opinion and your own views on life—this says that you're becoming independent and confident. May the Lord bless you in all your ways.

But I also see that a wall has grown in our relationship that is difficult for me to understand without your explanation. It's very painful for me that we became the cause of such misunderstandings. It's painful to hear silence in your presence, painful to see your indifference. It's painful not because you're difficult and react this way, but because we love you and want to understand you, but so far we cannot.

We don't want to make a 'convenient' son out of you and won't break you to fit us, be yourself. But remember that we are always nearby to be one team with you and help you when you need us. We won't turn away from you even when you make mistakes or do something not as is accepted in our house.

Forgive us when we, wishing you well, attack you with accusations or reproaches. We sometimes try things we don't understand very well ourselves, and you suffer from this, and we suffer with you.

We pray for ourselves and for you and believe that when we don't have wisdom for how to influence you and what to give you, then God Himself leads you and doesn't leave you alone.

In communication with mom, we talk a lot about you, share our joys and sorrows with each other, wanting to understand what we're doing wrong and what we're doing right. And if you help us better understand your feelings, we would be very grateful to you. You are the dearest person to us and will always be, because you are our son and we love you.

We miss communicating with you, your laughter, your hugs, your questions. You are not a stranger and will never become one. You have a home where you will always find support and approval. We love you not for good grades, not for exemplary behavior, not for appearance, but because you are our son, given to us by God.

Remember that we are nearby and always await your open heart. We always pray for you and believe that the Lord hears us and answers.

Open your heart to us when it's ready. We're not hurrying.

With love. Your dad."

Your letter can be electronic or typed, but it's better to write it by hand on paper, and let it contain the spirit of love and acceptance.

Questions for Reflection

1. Please read 1 John 3:18; Prov. 1:8-9; 10:1; 15:1,17; 16:24; 17:17; Ps. 103:13; 1 Cor. 13:4-7; Col. 3:13,21; Eph. 4:29; 6:4; Matt. 7:12; Rom. 12:10; 1 Pet. 4:8, in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What was revealed to you in this chapter?
4. Why do teenagers often close themselves off from communication with parents?
5. Why can written communication be more effective than verbal conversation in communicating with a teenager?

6. How often should one resort to written communication with a teenager?
7. What reaction from the teenager can be expected after reading such a letter?
8. How to help a teenager understand that parents are truly interested in his feelings and thoughts?
9. What to do if the letter caused a negative reaction in the teenager?
10. How to help a teenager through a letter realize that his problems and experiences are normal for his age?
11. How to show in a letter that you're ready to listen and hear the teenager?
12. How to properly end a letter so that it motivates the teenager to reflection and response?
13. In what cases can written communication be preferable to direct conversation with a teenager?
14. What other ways for building bridges with a teenager do you know?

A Father's Letter to His Beloved Daughter

How many of you have received love letters from your fathers or mothers? And how many of you, having your own teenage children, write them love letters? I would very much like this lesson to change something in your life and in the lives of your children. Even if you don't have children, this is no excuse for having no one to share love with. Let that person who is very close to you become the recipient of your letters. Writing love letters is an entire science of Heavenly origin. You can copy someone else's letter and send it under your name, but then your life after that needs to correspond to the written confessions. It's best to write letters from heart to heart. Let it be ungrammatical, with missing commas and many mistakes, but from a loving heart. Believe me, a teenager very much needs your love, and this recognition will be great support and protection for him in difficult moments of life.

Let it be a couple of sincere sentences, but written by your hand and expressing your friendly attitude.

In a letter you can describe your thoughts and feelings that are not visible to the eyes. In it you can talk with someone who doesn't want to hear and see you. In it you can write what you will never say with words. It can be written quickly, or it can be composed over several days. It can change not only someone's life, but also yours, establishing you in good intentions that you describe on paper.

Woman was originally created for love, and an inner need to be loved or very loved is laid within her. Male love means very much to her, which is why girls become so strongly attached to their loving fathers, and then to loving husbands, that they consider these people the most important people in the world.

If a daughter is accustomed to receiving fatherly love and can always count on it, then an additional letter from father on this topic will only add happiness to her and adorn her everyday life for a long time. A love letter is good because it knows how to speak to reason and heart and transmit the author's spirit over

many years. It necessarily contains that depth which will be revealed not from the first reading. And if you consider the spiritual belonging of the letter's author to God, then you can be confident that his words of love will be written under the influence of the Holy Spirit, Who afterward, over many years, will continue to exert His influence on the reader. The best example of this is the Bible. These are also someone's letters that still exert powerful influence on every reader.

In a letter to a daughter, it's important to consider her age, her emotional state, and your relationship. A father's letter to his beloved teenage daughter might look something like this:

"My dear girl, how I always rejoice that I have you, that you are given to me by God for life, as my daughter, as a part of me in this world, as joy for every day. Just recently I held you, my little treasure weighing 3.5 kilograms, and didn't imagine who would grow from her, and today you are already a young woman, though not yet completely adult, but already a little woman. Don't hurry to grow up, this will come in its own time.

In this letter I want to clearly repeat to you what you already know from our relationship, that I love you, my girl. And this love for you doesn't depend on how you look, how you study, or how you behave. It's more based on the fact that you exist, that you are my little daughter and that you are God's gift for life.

We won't always live together, mom and I are raising you so that someday you will leave our house forever and begin to live an independent life, independently of us, and then create your own family and belong to someone who, like me, decides to love you all his life, without any conditions. And this moment will come soon.

Always remember who you are in God's eyes and how highly you are valued by Heaven. And your value is determined not by your beauty, mind, or talents, but by your uniqueness in God's plan, your irreplaceability, and by that price of blood that was shed for your salvation.

Don't be afraid to make mistakes, because mistakes teach and are part of our upbringing. I make mistakes too. Don't try to be right in everything, but be yourself.

Don't try to please the opinion and expectations of the world, which imposes its standards of life and behavior—this is all vanity and requires much strength and means. Your soul is much more precious than all the money of this world, higher than all evaluations, and greater than all opinions.

Always remember that the most beautiful people are those who believe in Jesus and have personal relationships with Him within themselves, inviting Him into all their affairs.

Your smile and friendly heart make you beautiful at all times, for all people and in any company. Do you want to be beautiful? Smile and always choose love, happiness, and friendship, however hard it may be for you to make this choice. Remember that true beauty is not a goal, but a consequence of your inner peace with God and that genuine love for neighbors, which is becoming less and less in the world.

I love you, my girl, and am your faithful friend at all times, and you don't need to deserve this or do something special to win such an attitude. Just be yourself and remember that you are a beloved daughter. And even when the whole world turns away from you, accuses you of everything bad to trample your personality and bend you to itself, then know that I will always have my best opinion of you, and I will always have many useful and kind words addressed to you, which you can receive at any time. Let this reminder be support for you during life's storms.

And when I am no more, then remember that next to you there is always that true and faithful Heavenly Friend Jesus, Who not only exists, but always walks alongside through life, hears all your prayers, and helps in every matter. With Him you will never be alone, and He will never leave you. But in this unity there is one condition—you must make a covenant with God, dedicate yourself to Him for service, and make Him the Lord of your life.

God didn't make a mistake when He gave you a special character, unique appearance, and many talents that are not yet fully revealed. In His book are written all your days when they didn't yet exist, so don't be afraid to trust Him and build your future in Him.

You see how the Lord blesses our home and makes it a special place in this world. This is because mom and I dedicated our lives to Him and live for Him. And this doesn't pass by inheritance. But you have an example and freedom to choose the same blessing or select another path.

Remember that we love you both in words and in our deeds and in our prayers for you and your protection. When our help is needed, we are always nearby.

Also remember that you won't always conquer everything. Sometimes more strength is needed to rise after a fall and go further, and the winner is not the one who came first, but the one who didn't leave the race, even when it was very hard.

You are not only our daughter, but also the daughter of the Heavenly King, if, of course, He is King in your heart.

And whoever you are and whoever you become, for me you will always be that girl whom I will never forget and will always love. Know this.

With love, your dad."

Questions for Reflection

1. Please read Prov. 4:3-4; 23:24-25; 29:25; 31:30; Song of Songs 4:7; 1 Pet. 3:3-4; Col. 3:12; Josh. 1:9; Rom. 15:13; Ps. 27:10; Mic. 7:8, in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What was revealed to you in this chapter?
4. Have you ever received love letters from your parents? What did you feel reading them?
5. Do you have any preserved letters in your home? What do they mean to you?
6. Do you believe that God can speak through a simple letter written with love?

7. What is the particularity of the father's spiritual role in a girl's life?
8. Why is it important to mention God's name in a letter to a teenager?
9. Can understanding of God's love and mercy be transmitted through a letter?
10. How does a letter written under the guidance of the Holy Spirit differ from an ordinary letter?
11. Do you believe that a wisely written letter under the guidance of the Holy Spirit can become a spiritual inheritance?
12. What exactly would you like a girl to remember forever from such a letter?
13. Should such letters be written only to one's own children, or is there someone else who could also receive such a gift?
14. What can be expected from such letters?

Pocket Money

Money is that sphere of life that we cannot bypass and pretend it's not for us. Everything in our world costs something, much can be bought and sold. Even many spiritual things need financing. Although the Gospel in the modern world is free and offered to people on a selfless basis, it costs someone big money and is distributed through huge capital investments and investments.

Children, as a rule, are financially dependent on their parents until their majority, and the smaller they are, the less their requests and needs for money. But with age, needs also grow, new interests in material goods appear, and the influence of the surrounding world and peers forms a certain way of thinking.

The civilized society of our time is set on raising consumers who are called to think about their material situation corresponding to changing fashion and creating their comfort zone based on permissible possibilities. And our children grow up under the influence of all these temptations and absorb the values of their environment, sometimes not knowing why this is needed, but trying to somehow correspond to it.

The question of pocket money for a child should not be posed as: to give or not to give? Because the correct answer is: to give; and not just allocate a certain sum, but also teach the growing person to correctly manage received funds and wisely manage accumulated money.

Preschool children usually ask parents to buy them what they like. They don't yet know the value of money, but they love new toys very much. In school years, the child learns to write and count, and it's from this age that parents need to allocate pocket money for him and conduct lessons explaining how and what to spend it on better, and what shouldn't be bought.

In early school years, the child can get by without personal funds, but the more he grows, the more his needs grow with him.

In teenage years, parents need to begin allocating certain sums of pocket money on a regular basis. This should not be a symbolic minimum, but also should not be large sums. And the earlier you begin doing this, the more you can tell about how to properly manage money, what to save it for, and where to give it.

The very first lesson that parents should show by their personal example is that they are God's stewards, and the true Owner of all their income is God, Who gives these means and gives health and strength to acquire wealth and other material goods. Through setting aside the tithe, which is the tenth part of all income, parents recognize God's authority as Master of their property and don't claim these monies under any guise. The same thing needs to be instilled in children.

Parents themselves should decide how and in what to educate their child in the area of finances, but the best example of teaching is your life and wisdom in managing resources entrusted to you. Theory is good because it lays a foundation in the child's consciousness, and personal experience shows how this knowledge is applicable in life.

In using his pocket money, the teenager should have complete freedom and can spend it on everything he wants, but with the clarification that this money is not intended for buying dangerous and forbidden things, such as drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, weapons, and gambling.

Although the teenager is free to spend everything as he wants, wise control from parents and observation of how received funds are used will give the opportunity to understand weak and strong sides in relation to money and give timely advice at the right time.

Mistakes in using personal funds is a normal learning process. Money can be spent all at once, unnecessary things can be bought with it, it can be invested in understanding "like everyone else" on all kinds of advertising trash, given to someone's imaginary needs, or eaten in a local diner. Don't scold your child for mistakes, but use these situations to teach

something. In such cases, it's worth remembering your childhood and sharing your stories about stupid expenditures that were also in your practice.

Also, don't hurry to replenish the teenager's empty pockets with extraordinary money. If he hurried and spent everything completely, then let him wait for the appointed time and not get ahead of events.

The issuance of due pocket money should be no less than once a month. Don't reduce the due sum without valid reasons. Let the teenager count on your faithfulness in this matter. Money can be given once a week, and if there's necessity—every school day for school lunches, knowing the cost of what the student buys for himself. Money for food doesn't relate to pocket money, but if the teenager wants to save on his stomach to buy something else with this money, then give him this right.

It's good to teach the teenager to divide all received sums into several funds. The first fund is the tithe, the Lord's sanctuary, which cannot be touched under any pretext and must be returned to God at the appointed time. The next fund is the missionary department, where money can be set aside for different charitable needs, voluntary offerings, and missionary trips. This fund is called the "second tithe," and its size should be determined by the steward himself.

After this, it would be good to have an accumulation fund where the teenager could set aside part of received funds for big goals that cannot be achieved in a short time. And the remainder of money can be used for current needs.

Correct and wise financial management includes developing many useful spiritual qualities, such as: wisdom, patience, long-suffering, abstinence, honesty, faithfulness, mercy, joy, kindness, generosity, empathy, analysis, ability to plan, value, respect others' labor, and fight many temptations.

Money becomes not only an instrument for raising good qualities of the soul, but it also performs the function of litmus paper, revealing many hidden character features that would never manifest themselves in another sphere.

Parents' ignorance in teaching children financial literacy can contribute to raising another consumer or be covered by God's mercy, where the Lord will send light into the teenager's life from another source of knowledge. But parents have special influence on their children and can timely invest many useful things in their consciousness that will be very useful in subsequent life.

Pocket money is a kind of fitness center for the teenager, where he trains spiritual muscles, acquires the ability to make mistakes and analyze, calculate, foresee, and understand, in order to enter adult life with this experience and know his worth and the worth of his strength.

Parents cannot deprive the teenager of pocket money if he has additional income from some temporary work performed. But if he got permanent work and has stable income, then the necessity of giving pocket money automatically disappears and other concerns appear.

Questions for Reflection

1. Please read Gen. 1:1; Luke 16:10-11; Prov. 3:9-10; 6:6-8; 10:4; 11:24-25; 13:11; 14:23; 20:7; 21:5; 23:4-5; Eccl. 11:9; 1 Tim. 3:4, in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What was revealed to you in this chapter?
4. Why is God the Owner of all money?
5. What character qualities are developed with the correct attitude toward money?
6. Why can money become "litmus paper" for checking character?
7. How to distinguish God's wisdom in managing money from human greed?
8. Is it necessary to keep track of one's expenses?
9. Were you given pocket money in childhood? If yes, how did this influence your financial thinking?
10. What mistakes did you yourself make in youth when managing money?
11. How does wisdom in expenses differ from strict economy?

12. Why shouldn't you give a teenager too little or too much money?
13. Why is it important to give the teenager freedom to manage money?
14. How to explain to a child the difference between "desire" and "necessity" in spending?

God's Stewards

A teenager, managing his pocket money, is not obligated to immediately do everything correctly—he simply doesn't know how yet and doesn't know how. And before requiring or expecting something from him, he needs to be taught this and explained why he should act this way and not otherwise. It's always necessary to leave him freedom in making decisions, because he may see the situation completely differently, not as you do. Mistakes in handling money can become a good tool for teaching the teenager many useful laws.

If in your youth you didn't receive any money from anyone and therefore now don't intend to give it to your children, don't repeat the mistakes of your parents and mentors—be wiser teachers.

The absence of pocket money can contribute to the development in the teenager's consciousness of evil temptations and illegal ways—such as theft, fraud, envy, love of money, and deception—for the sake of obtaining desired things.

If you simply give your son or daughter pocket money and don't take interest in how they spend it, then the main goal of such an undertaking will not be achieved. Parents should not only provide for their children, but also teach them to manage even small funds, to be faithful stewards. Wise mentors will never hand over large sums for personal expenses to an inexperienced teenager, since the young person has no acute need for this, and he can quickly get used to such handouts, and then consider a smaller sum an insult or even robbery. But what's important is not so much the very fact of handing over pocket money, as friendly control from parents and gentle instruction at a convenient opportunity.

Wise questions and stories about one's own youthful mistakes in handling finances can contribute to trust and open conversations on this topic. The absence of condemnation from adults will open the teenager's heart for dialogue, in which he

can boldly share his plans, dreams, boast about purchases, and rejoice together with you.

If you see that the teenager quickly spends everything, and then yearns waiting for the next "portion" of money, don't accelerate events with premature payments. It's better to explain that a similar attitude toward money existed in you too, but you learned to overcome it—and tell how.

The handing over of pocket money is like a training gym before entering adult life, where any mistakes can cost very dearly and painfully.

The younger the teenager, the more willingly he will accept learning in game form. Suggest playing master and steward: you give a certain sum and wait for a full report on its expenditure. If the steward was wise, you declare him a good and faithful servant and invite him into your joy. And if he made a mistake—give him valuable advice and express faith that next time he will act differently.

Always remember that everything should be with love and from love. And if you lack this—ask God, and it will be given to you.

It's important to explain to the teenager that a good thing costs good money, and you need to save for it, setting aside a certain sum each time.

A good practice will be to start a notebook for accounting received and spent funds. This will help the teenager quickly learn to separate the needed from the desired.

If you see that the child is fired up with desire to acquire something valuable—let him write down this goal in numbers and regularly mark each contribution to its achievement. You, in turn, observing his efforts and wise approach, can promise to add something from yourself—on condition that your additional funds will go only toward this goal.

It's also important, besides pocket money, to teach the teenager to seek additional ways to earn by his own labor. This is not difficult to organize, agreeing with friends or neighbors about small payment for some services. But you shouldn't turn

household duties into business. What the teenager should do around the house shouldn't be paid for. But special assignments—for example, washing dad's car or ironing his shirt—can be made paid.

A wise attitude toward control over income and expenses teaches the teenager to value money and understand where it comes from.

In matters of spiritual donations there should not be the slightest pressure, condemnation, or coercion from parents—only explanation of why this is important and how to do it correctly. The teenager should understand that God will never condemn or punish someone who decides to give Him everything, and even more than expected. Show by your love how the Lord loves a cheerful giver. Share with children your stories of sacrifice and joy from such actions.

In the sphere of donations, explain that sacrifice to God is not an investment expecting profit. Sacrifice is giving forever, out of love for God, with desire to give Him the very best. And generosity is not quantity or price, but a state of heart. It's also important to convey the truth that Jesus identifies Himself with every person, and by helping needy people, we thereby serve God in the person of these people.

Teach children to be faithful in returning the tithe, to consult with God before each purchase, to ask Him for wisdom in managing finances and in acquiring new funds by honest means.

Children should understand that parents are not judges and not controllers, but mentors, helpers, sponsors, and their first employers.

Pocket money brightly reveals inner selfishness, but also reveals a generous heart. It reveals wastefulness or greed, gratitude or a consumer attitude, striving to work or desire to receive everything for free. But in the father's house all these qualities are in the safe shell of parental care, where father and mother seek a wise approach—to correct shortcomings or establish virtues.

Don't turn pocket money into a means of manipulation to achieve discipline or fulfill any tasks. Let it be for the teenager like the sun—shining on both good and evil, both obedient and disobedient. Don't humiliate the child's dignity with phrases like: "Again you bought all sorts of nonsense!" or "When will you learn to handle money?" Raise a wise heart in the teenager, controlling only what opens to you through trusting relationships.

It's important to convey to the teenager that in life what's more important is not what you have, but who you are. Chasing after what's "like everyone else" quickly tires, ruins, and doesn't bring true joy—only forces you to buy more and more, mistakenly thinking that this is the secret of happiness and universal respect.

The teenager should clearly understand who manages whom: he manages money, or money manages him? Does his environment dictate to him what he should be and how to spend money, or does he make these decisions himself?

Parents, always remember: gentle, unobtrusive conversation and wise questions are stronger and more useful than any check. Try to notice not only expenses, but also the teenager's needs, not only mistakes, but also wise investments. Teach him to plan and invest money in what can not only please the eye and stomach, but also bring additional income.

Questions for Reflection

1. Please read Luke 16:10; 1 Cor. 4:2; 2 Cor. 9:7; Prov. 3:9-10; 10:4; 11:25; 13:1,11; 21:5; 22:29; 24:3-4; Eccl. 7:12; Acts 20:35; 1 Tim. 6:10; Matt. 6:24, in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What was revealed to you in this chapter?
4. What is the main goal of pocket money—simply to please the child or to teach something?
5. Why do you think God entrusts "little" before entrusting "much"? (Luke 16:10)
6. Does dad's generosity or greed influence the teenager's attitude toward money?

7. How does "giving money" differ from "teaching to manage it"?
8. What does it mean to be a "good steward" in the context of teenage years?
9. How can you encourage a teenager to share without forcing?
10. Should you punish for irresponsible spending? Why?
11. How to turn an unsuccessful purchase into a lesson of wisdom?
12. Why is it important to connect the topic of money with the topic of work?
13. How should parents support a teenager wanting to earn extra money?
14. What might happen if a teenager is given a bank card without explanations and control?

The Teenager's Appearance

How a teenager looks says much more about him and his inner world than it seems at first glance. Appearance combines many factors of spirituality, self-identification, taste, influence of the world and fashion, external pressure, family upbringing, purity, and holiness.

Appearance can include:

- clothing and its style in combination of color, cut and fabric, brands and inscriptions;
- shoes and their style;
- accessories, which include all kinds of jewelry, bags and backpacks, glasses and headwear;
- use of cosmetics, deodorants, and perfume;
- hairstyle, neatness, length and color of hair;
- cleanliness and neatness of body, skin, and nails or their untidiness with the presence of foreign odors and dirt;
- presence or absence of stubble in boys;
- posture, pose, gesticulation, and manner of holding oneself and behaving;
- facial expression, which unmistakably conveys mood through smile, facial expressions, and observant eyes.

Clothing is the soul's business card, which creates a first impression of a person, sometimes clearly revealing his dignity or inner problems. This is a visual language through which the teenager wants to tell the world something about himself and his significance, that he is no longer a child and that he represents something.

The Bible pays special attention to the clothing of God's people, to reveal to this world through it the holiness, uniqueness, and purity of God's representatives. Through instructions and restrictions in appearance, God tries to convey to consciousness the message that His children should not conform to this world, but be a special and holy people.

Appearance should contain cleanliness, neatness, modesty, correspondence to gender, season, and place of stay.

There are general rules for boys and girls, but there are distinctive features that need to be clearly separated.

A young man is a prototype of an adult man, future father and head of family. And this dignity should be present in his appearance. Appearance begins with short and wise instructions from father and mother from the earliest age, when the child is taught hygiene, cleanliness, and instilled with taste for certain things accepted in the culture of this people. The personal example of parents' appearance lays a solid foundation for the subsequent correspondence of their children's appearance.

Explaining certain norms or requirements lays understanding and meaning in the child's consciousness. And when the transitional period from childhood to youth comes, the teenager tries to find himself and his place in society. Here it's important not to forbid, but to help him choose between "like everyone else" and what's right.

When a teenager feels unconditional love from parents, he won't strive to express his need for attention through appearance and will approach more soberly how he looks.

The teenager needs to be given freedom in choosing clothing and shoes that he likes and that he will willingly wear, and through this choice understand what this young person lives by, under whose influence he is, and what values he has in priority.

The influence of modern fashion, the appearance of popular artists, singers, or bloggers creates a certain image in the viewer's consciousness, which one wants to imitate. If this is the main criterion in choosing clothes, then this should be for parents that signal that they missed something and lagged behind somewhere and let the world get ahead of them in this matter. Although you shouldn't forbid the teenager to wear what he wants, you can express your personal opinion and God's will regarding provocative clothing or those things that are difficult to call decent and neat.

The body is not a showcase, but a temple of the Holy Spirit, and the teenager should know and understand this.

Appearance attracts a person to oneself, and inner beauty keeps this person near oneself. The purpose of clothing is not to tempt, not to shock and surprise, but to reflect God's light, human dignity, purity, and holiness.

It's also important to understand that certain clothing styles, incomprehensible drawings or signs on it, or strange inscriptions can reflect occult things and attract demonic forces into life, which will be temptation both for the clothing owner and for his environment.

Sexuality is what the world tries to impose on young people through clothing and all kinds of fashionable trends. Young people are made to believe that attractiveness is being seductive and frank in demonstrating what should be hidden under clothing. But clothing should not attract foreign glances to the body, it should attract attention to the face and eyes.

Parents can influence their children's wardrobe through sincere admiration of their spiritual beauty, through recognition of them as especially beautiful and unique in God's eyes, through their genuine love, and through personal example in demonstrating decent and neat clothing.

If mom walks around the house all day in a torn robe or goes out in public in very revealing clothing, then her demands on children regarding decency in clothing will look not entirely convincing.

The enemy of the soul sophisticates and mocks humanity, offering ridiculous or vulgar clothing, calling it fashionable. Torn clothing was always considered a sign of poverty or ignorance, and now it has become "decent" even to come to spiritual gatherings in it, because it's so fashionable. And the essence remains the same—careless attitude toward others and God.

Fashion is not absolute evil, it can advertise decent and practical clothing and shoes. Here common sense and absence of sporting interest in trying to keep up with its requirements are needed.

God in His love gave His people the light of Dress Reform, where He very clearly expressed criteria of decency and ignorance. Who now studies these questions and who lives according to this given light? God doesn't want to bring His message to fanaticism and push away its significance through radically minded people. But He also doesn't welcome indifference in this matter, as it entails the influence of the world, which forms completely different values. When the criterion of decency becomes not God's word, but "like everyone else," then should the Lord adjust and bless what He doesn't approve?

Holiness in clothing is visible to the spiritual eye. When a spiritual man chooses a life companion, not many girls pass through his spiritual sieve, and the very first criterion is appearance, which attracts not the heart, but the eyes and carries a message about the inner rebellion of a person who has nothing in common with holiness.

The teenager learns what he is taught, is transformed into the one he looks upon, becomes who he wants to be, and he needs wise mentors before finally deciding.

Appropriate questions like: "Why do you like this particular thing?" or: "Would you want to appear before God in this form?" can direct thoughts in the right direction and help decide and make the right choice.

It's important to teach teenagers: we wear clothing not only for ourselves, but also for others—so as not to tempt, not to cause envy, not to provoke, but to shine light. We want to be beautiful for people, but we shouldn't forget about God, Who also wants to admire us.

Questions for Reflection

1. Please read Matt. 5:14-16; 23:27; 2 Cor. 5:12; 1 Cor. 6:19-20; 1 Pet. 3:3-4; Ex. 19:10; Gen. 41:42; Deut. 22:5; Prov. 11:22; 15:13; 31:25; Eccl. 8:1; 9:8; Col. 3:12; Gal. 3:27, in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What did you like from this lesson?

4. What does your appearance preach?
5. Under whose influence are you when you buy clothing for yourself?
6. For whom do you take care of your appearance?
7. Do you think modesty has gone out of fashion?
8. What would you think of yourself if you saw yourself from the side?
9. How to be beautiful for God?
10. Have you ever checked inscriptions on clothing before buying it?
11. Can one be holy and stylish at the same time?
12. Why are we advised in Rev. 3:18 to buy white clothing?
13. Where does nakedness begin?
14. Would you like to hear about yourself that you are naked, at a time when you seem to be clothed?

A Father's Influence on His Daughter's Appearance

In every woman is placed the need to be loved and protected. And this property of the soul doesn't go anywhere at any age. Your teenage daughter is no exception to this rule, and her need for love is present in her heart and seeks the source of this love in other people. Blessed is that girl who has discovered the spring of love in Jesus and quenches this thirst at all times, but at the same time it must be remembered that her soul also thirsts for human recognition in the form of visible human love.

A father who sincerely loves his daughter and constantly tells her about it has enormous influence on the formation of the girl's personality and is very powerful protection for her in spiritual life. The word of a loving father always has weight in the daughter's life and provides support in difficult times. The father plays an important role in forming femininity in his daughter and is a protector of this quality of soul in subsequent years.

He can boldly tell his teenage daughter about her external beauty, combining this with inner qualities, admiring her transformation into a full-fledged woman. Dad in this case is the safest observer and critic, who is most interested in the happy future of his girl, and for him she will always be a baby in whom he will always find something beautiful.

The father's love and admiration protect the young girl from many temptations and influences from outside. Receiving what's necessary in her family, she won't thirst to receive this from outside. And the father's wise approach in raising a worthy person from his daughter will bear its fruit in the teenage period and help to have special relationships with the growing girl.

When a girl feels her father's love, his acceptance and adoration, then her heart is saturated with confidence, peace, and reciprocity. She is loved, and this becomes her reliable protection from external influences of the world and peer

environment, which in the absence of such love invent all kinds of ways of personal protection. In this sense, fatherly love not only forms character in the daughter, but also has strong influence on the expression of her inner feelings through appearance, what it will be: provocative or modest, refined or chaotic, worthy or reflecting inner emptiness.

It's important that the father, besides love, also understands what's happening in the heart and body of his growing daughter, and has an idea about holiness in clothing. If it's customary in his house to walk around in underwear and a t-shirt, then he's unlikely to react to such an appearance of his daughter when she puts on very revealing clothing to go out in public.

A girl's appearance is the language of her heart, it's her message to the world about herself: how she sees herself, what she wants, what she feeds her mind with, how she relates to herself and others, whom she worships, what she expects. Often the appearance and manner of behavior of a girl determine how those whose attention she wants to attract will relate to her.

Youth and beauty are what the world highly values and respects. And if youth is something natural in a teenager's appearance, then the concept of beauty can be relative and perceived by the girl quite painfully and categorically. And if fatherly love and personal relationships with God are absent in this struggle for appearance, then the world will put its values into consciousness, which will begin to dictate to the girl how she should look and how she should behave among her peers.

Let's take some domestic animal, for example a cat, and using its example try to understand how many decorations it needs to hang to become beautiful and attractive? What cosmetics does it need to use so that its appearance doesn't repel the gaze? What tattoo can be made for it so that it becomes a cool cat in the whole neighborhood? Or what brand would suit it best so that all the local cats would start noticing it? The correct answer: none and no kind. And why? Because it's created so perfectly and uniquely that there's nothing to add to this. And

there's no sense for it in a fifth leg or second tail. It simply lives and thinks about completely different values.

Of course, a girl is not a cat, and she needs special care for her appearance, even to look natural and modest. But neither she nor her parents should forget that besides external beauty, by which everyone is customarily met in our world, there's also inner beauty, by which one wants to stay nearby and enjoy the presence of this person in your life.

Dear father, if you want to see your daughter happy and beautiful in all respects, then start with love, with studying her spiritual needs and necessities, so that she receives everything necessary for her soul from you and doesn't go seeking counterfeits of this from outside. Talk with her about her, about her appearance, about her beauty, hug her, admire her natural appearance, her hair, her voice, her modesty. Emphasize in her the natural beauty of God's design, embodied in her body and soul, and let her understand that God didn't make a mistake creating exactly her as she is. And with all this love—love her mother too. When the daughter knows her true worth through your attention, love, and respect for her, then she won't need to prove something to someone and seek this evaluation in other eyes.

Remember that her appearance is a continuation of your influence or an attempt to fill what she doesn't receive from you.

If you relate to her growing up with understanding and respect her freedom, then she will pass through the difficult times of her formation with honor and won't be ashamed of her heart and her reflection in the mirror.

She needs you not as a gendarme watching the contents of her closet, but as a friend who with his love forms her inner beauty, from which light and blessing will emanate for everyone else.

You're raising this person not for yourself, but so that someday you can solemnly hand over this treasure into the reliable hands of her future husband, so that he can enjoy those labors and investments of your influence, under which this miracle

was formed. God entrusted you with the most precious thing—a living soul, which you and your wife formed in your image and likeness.

Your unconditional love doesn't deprive your daughter of personal choice of her life path and manner of behavior, but it helps her see meaning and purpose and will always support her during falls and help her understand her true value among the temptations of this world.

Remember also that you're not all-powerful and can't do much or change much in the life of even the closest person. But in Heaven there is One who hears all your prayers for your daughter and can influence her choice so strongly and bless her in correct decisions as is not within your power. Let your prayers for your daughter always be fresh in communication with the Heavenly Father, and you will definitely see their embodiment in your daughter's life. And if you miss something, then the Lord will correct that too.

And maybe someday she will tell her future husband: "You remind me of my dad—he loved me the same way and helped me become who I am now." And then you'll understand—your love truly transformed her and left a trace of eternity in her heart.

Questions for Reflection

1. Please read 1 Sam. 16:7; Prov. 11:22; 17:6; 20:7; 31:30; Mal. 4:6; Eph. 6:4; Song of Songs 1:15; 4:7; Ezek. 16:13-14; Matt. 10:30-31; 1 John 3:1; Rom. 5:5; Isa. 43:4, in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What did you like in this lesson?
4. Do you think girls like how their fathers admire them?
5. Reading this lesson, whom do you see yourself as in it?
6. Would it be appropriate for a father to hug his daughter every day and constantly tell her some compliments?
7. Can a father become a mirror for his daughter?
8. How can you inspire your daughter to modesty and holiness in appearance?

9. How to correctly use Biblical quotes to help a girl see herself through God's eyes?
10. Should you listen to what your daughter says about her appearance in prayer?
11. How to determine if a girl is confident that her father and her God love her as she is?
12. Do you remind your daughter that she is God's daughter, chosen and loved?
13. How to tell a girl about the purpose of beauty—not to attract glances, but to glorify God?
14. Did you notice that this lesson physically doesn't contain all the important things about a father's influence on his daughter's appearance?
15. What would you like to add to what you've read?

Youthful Maximalism

Youthful maximalism is one type of extremity in worldview, manifesting in categorical judgment, in black-and-white thinking, in irreconcilability with compromises, both in bad and good directions. This is a kind of "dark night of the soul" through which, one way or another, every teenager passes. He already feels adult, but doesn't have enough life experience, his feelings are turbulent, and sound thinking hasn't yet formed, he thinks he knows answers to all questions, but hasn't yet seen real difficulties of life, sees everything as terrible or everything as beautiful.

This state of soul is normal in the development of a teenager's personality, and parents need to be ready for such a turn of events and for sharp changes in their child's life, as their authority is put into great question, and if they try to correct this situation by force or pressure, they may encounter unpredictable problems. The teenager may close himself off for many years, leave home, change faith and join some incomprehensible religious movement, quit studies, create a hasty family, or commit suicide.

Many factors are involved in this teenage crisis, starting from hormonal and physiological changes and including the formation of a new personality with a pronounced desire for self-identification and significance. Not having enough life experience in adult life, the teenager sees the open world differently than his parents. He may come to the opinion that everyone around lies, that parents understand nothing in life, that there are only hypocrites in church, and among friends there are complete traitors. And if you notice something similar in his vocabulary, then don't try to convince him otherwise, but try to understand and help pass through this interesting stage of life without any radical actions on his part.

At the age of 14-16 years, a sense of justice develops in the teenager, and it begins to seem to him that he knows everything, can distinguish truth from lies, sees sin and hypocrisy, and also has his understanding of how things should

be and happen. Listen carefully to your young pioneer and learn to build not walls, but bridges. You won't lose anything from being attentive to his radical measures and evaluations, and relationships will be preserved. Don't enter into disputes and disagreements, but with your wise questions lead his consciousness to the fact that besides the extremes he has established, there are other worlds and other understanding of reality.

If attacks begin on you that you don't live right, don't believe right, and that you're not real, which may have a grain of truth, then accept this with love and dignity, explaining that adults can also make mistakes and be imperfect. Ask him to give you advice in this case "what to do?" and don't argue with the answer you hear.

In the personality of Samson we observe the manifestation of youthful maximalism and what incomprehensible actions he performed. And we ourselves passed through these gates, only over time we forgot our experiences, and that time was different, so it's difficult to compare.

Youthful maximalism can be expressed not only in a negative view of things, but also in striving for good and truth. And in this case, one shouldn't suppress turbulent emotions with an authoritarian attitude. Converse, don't preach, communicate, don't dictate, listen, don't argue. Love your teenager even when his behavior doesn't please you. Remember that all his turbulent waves create a storm in the glass of his feelings and emotions. This will pass. He won't always be like this. Time is a good teacher, and life is a wise mentor.

Respect the young person's boundaries, but always have a door in these boundaries through which you can always enter to show your love in deed.

If you are restrained in emotions, calm in conversation, respectful, acknowledge your imperfection and right to error, ready to listen and don't hurry with advice, then by this you win trust and help the teenager learn from your example.

God didn't endow the teenager with the wisdom of an elder, but prepared for him a beautiful path of ups and downs, successes and mistakes, victories and defeats, to teach him life exactly this way and endow him with wisdom from his own experience.

If it seems to you that your teenager is in rebellion and losing his right to Eternity, then don't hurry ahead of time with such conclusions. God put such turning moments into every person's life to cleanse the heart from excess burden, to free oneself from unnecessary childhood baggage in due time and enter adult life as a tireless researcher and enthusiast. Although Solomon calls this vanity, it's exactly through this that the path of every young person passes. It's important for parents to set the right direction for the young growing experimenter, without breaking the fresh sprout in the process. Youthful maximalism is not a disease, but a life stage, and it can be dangerous for a teenager without wise mentorship from the older generation, but can become a special blessing under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. This is a thirst for the correct absolute, which in our fallen world, alas, doesn't exist. This is a thirst for justice where it should be. This is revulsion toward hypocrisy. This is a need for love and recognition. This is pain from realizing the inability to change the surrounding world.

Aloud this may sound something like: "I'm better than others!"; "I won't be like them!"; "I'll be real!"; "Better not to have friends, then there won't be pain from betrayal!"; "Leave me alone!"; "Life has no meaning—all around is just deception!"

Love knows how to react to each such statement.

The path to perfection, ideal, and holiness passes through all kinds of trials, crises, and falls. The apostle Paul also once described similar experiences in Romans 7:19,24: "For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice... O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?"

But it's exactly this path that helps see depth, look not at faces but at hearts, understand others' imperfections, distinguish hypocrisy from sincerity.

Don't fear your teenager's disappointments in our imperfect world, but wisely point to the One who is true Perfection, with whom there is no shadow of turning; who is the Way, Truth, and Life.

Continue to pray for your perfectionists and love them at all times. Let children know that even if you're not perfect, you're real and loving not for something, but at all times.

This storm will pass and peace will come. Life will teach the teenager not to fly in the clouds of his fantasies and not to see everything as gloomy, but to accept each person as he is and create a beautiful present around himself, having personal relationships with Jesus.

Maturity can be recognized when the teenager stops judging others but has interest in truth. When he speaks gently and reasonably. When he stops being rude and begins to listen. When he's interested in everything but plans what suits him. When he chooses life with God and purposefully goes this course, having the ultimate goal—Eternal Life and closer relationships with Jesus.

And then parents need only to step aside so that their pupil can independently go toward the chosen Goal.

Questions for Reflection

1. Please read Rom. 15:1; Isa. 42:1-4; 55:8-9; Prov. 15:1; 16:25; 25:15; Eph. 6:4; 1 Pet. 4:8; Phil. 1:6; 2 Cor. 12:9; 1 John 2:14; Eccl. 12:1, in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What was useful for you to learn in this lesson?
4. Why did the Lord put such stages of personality formation into human development?
5. What mistakes of youth became real lessons for you and why?
6. What would you yourself have wanted to hear from your father at age 15?
7. What words of encouragement could you say to support a teenager's dreams?

8. In what do you see the special value of youthful maximalism?
9. What helps parents be a team in raising a teenager, rather than gendarmes or rivals?
10. What can be done to become a "bridge" rather than a "wall" for a young heart?
11. What words could become the motto of your communication with teenagers?
12. What can teenagers teach adults if adults are attentive to them?
13. Is youthful maximalism bad or good?
14. What tradition could be introduced in the family to strengthen joy and closeness?

A Teenager's Infatuation

Parents, creating their family, pass through different stages of their relationships and greatly need wise instruction from wise people to be confident that their choice corresponds not only to their desires, but also to God's will, common sense, and many other criteria that will influence further relationships and mutual happiness.

But when these parents raise a teenager and he reaches a certain age when it's already possible or even necessary for him to fall in love with someone, then they may decide that the growing child will somehow figure out his feelings on his own and infatuation is his personal business.

Blessed is that teenager who will have wise mentors or turn to pure sources of information to understand what's happening to him and how to behave correctly during this time. And if a book about premarital relationships falls into his hands, this will be a great blessing for him. But the role and support of believing and wise parents during this time is invaluable, because who, if not they, best understands what's happening and can give useful instructions and help the teenager cope with an avalanche of feelings so as not to be swallowed by this storm.

Infatuation is not love, but another stage of growing up planned by God. A teenager's hormonal system is arranged so that it instantly reacts to external factors of influence and is directly connected with the organs of feeling and touch. The appearance of an interesting object of observation, his voice, warmth and smell of his body transmit corresponding impulses to the center of pleasure and activate a whole factory of various hormones that create certain moods and experiences.

Personal sympathy and aesthetic pleasure can also influence the development of infatuation and bring with them a mass of new experiences into the teenager's life.

A growing young man is a person who tries to understand who he is, why he's here, where to go next, and how to live. He seeks his own paths of self-determination and wants to figure

out many experiences incomprehensible to him by his own strength. And his parents are the first people who can help him find correct answers to all his questions and direct him onto the eternal path. The Lord also wants to be a Mentor to the young person and help him pass the path of growing up as a victor over his feelings and desires.

Infatuation is attraction to a person of the opposite sex, connected with emotional experiences, romantic thoughts, and strong feelings. As a rule, this feeling has no solid foundation based on knowledge of the interesting object of one's infatuation, on understanding the nature of one's feelings and ability to manage what's happening. People commonly call this state: "lost his head," where everyone understands that the person fell in love and any unpredictable actions can be expected from him. But the problem of this soul state consists in it being based on feelings, emotions, emotional deficit, hormonal reactions of the organism, desire to be loved and to love. And it's important to learn to control these feelings, otherwise they'll begin to control the will. This time eventually comes and is a step planned by God in forming an adult personality.

Infatuation can arise in early childhood, and during the transition to youth, and even grow into close friendship if it receives reciprocity in response. Parents shouldn't fear this, but it's important to be ready for these events and participate in explaining what's happening. We're not forbidden to be friends with those we like and love those given to us by God, but all these relationships and accompanying experiences should be under control of reason and will and not be temptation for developing base feelings that destroy body and soul.

It's worth explaining to the teenager that infatuation is not yet love, but a feeling that seeks its own, includes a new world of new experiences and sensations, wants to receive pleasure and quick response to its claims. It can pass as quickly as it arose and leave behind emptiness and disappointment.

And if it arises during youthful maximalism, it can radically declare that adults understand nothing about the teenager's

feelings or that it's better to be alone all one's life than to cast oneself into such disappointments and trials.

It's worth considering that many life situations and emotional experiences are perceived by the teenager many times more strongly than happens in an adult person. His nerves at this age can be like untuned taut strings, ready to emit strange sounds at any touch.

In communicating with an infatuated teenager, parents should let him understand that they understand what's happening to him and can share their personal experience of experiences they had at this age. But it's better to begin these conversations before their child begins to "lose his head," preparing the young creature for upcoming trials. Infatuation will definitely come, and if it's one-sided or rejected, it can bring many disappointments and plunge the young creature into depression or mild mental disorder. It's important not to let the teenager fall into emotional attachment to the object of his infatuation or go into sinful fantasies or occupy his heart with someone who obviously won't bring blessing.

Love, however, knows how to wait, not seek its own, but serve, give, think about another's happiness, forget about personal comfort for the sake of others' good. Love doesn't impose itself and doesn't suffer when rejected. It seeks all possible ways to reach the neighbor's heart and simply gladden him with its sincere participation in the person's life. It considers the status of the one it loves and doesn't break in where it's not allowed. It skillfully fills all space within boundaries allowed to it and begins to permeate any relationships with itself, making them close and interesting. It comes from God to return to Him in deeds of love and again reveal its Creator in greater power and influence.

How to determine that your teenager has fallen in love? I think this is the most difficult thing that can be secretly hidden from parents for a long time. They'll immediately determine by his behavior that something unusual is happening, and here it's necessary to help the teenager correctly pass through this life stage.

Don't be surprised if he talks with you about a possible wedding and how serious this is. Help him understand his feelings and look more soberly at such experiences.

God tests the young soul in these circumstances to give lessons of faithfulness and move young people to closer relationships with Himself. He wants to give young men victory over sinful fantasies and carnal infatuations, preserve the soul from the sin of sensuality, and show the beauty of chastity and holiness.

Infatuation is not sin, but an opportunity to learn to trust this experience to God and with His help learn to manage one's thoughts and feelings, one's tastes and preferences, and give Him authority to form in the heart a solid foundation for real and lasting love.

Youth is not the most suitable time to build relationships, but the best age to build character.

Questions for Reflection

1. Please read 2 Tim. 2:22; Eccl. 11:9; Ps. 119:9; 1 Cor. 10:13; Jer. 29:11-12; Prov. 2:10-12; 4:23; 20:11; James 1:14-15; Rom. 13:14; Phil. 1:9-10; Col. 3:2, in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. Who did you see yourself as in this lesson?
4. How do you remember your first infatuation? What feelings did you experience then?
5. Is infatuation bad? If not, what danger does it represent?
6. Did you have a time when you "lost your head" from feelings? How did it end?
7. What qualities of the opposite sex did you seek in youth?
8. At what age should you begin talking with a teenager on the topic of infatuation?
9. How to explain to your teenager the difference between infatuation and love?
10. With what words could you console a teenager in case of unrequited sympathy?
11. What can you do so the teenager doesn't hide from you with his feelings?

12. What example of "healthy infatuation" could you tell your teenager?
13. How can you prepare a teenager for possible disappointment in feelings?
14. Do you consider it necessary to pray together with the teenager about his future chosen one?

A Daughter in Love

Girls and boys differ radically from each other both in appearance and in their inner structure. One shouldn't generalize these people and attribute the properties of one sex to another. It's characteristic for girls to think about boys based on their understanding of reality, and accordingly boys judge girls by themselves. And since they see in other representatives of humanity an absolute opposite, they don't always understand each other and prefer a team of their own kind. But the time comes when interesting changes occur in the body, and the formation of new hormones brings with them new feelings and emotions.

Parents should understand that their son and daughter differ from each other and need both general instructions and individual conversations—both with father and with mother. It's important for parents to understand the daughter's feelings and experiences and not confuse them with the son's feelings. When their child is in love or is at the stage of growing up and will soon enter this romantic world, it's important to understand how and what the girl experiences, and how the young man passes through this path. God put completely different centers of perception into these beautiful creatures, and this must be known and understood.

Sexual and emotional maturation in girls begins by age earlier than in boys of the same age, and the female body begins to actively produce the hormone estrogen, which makes the girl more dreamy, sensitive, inclined to romantic relationships and experiences. The female brain reacts more emotionally to external factors and during infatuation idealizes the object of its interest.

It's characteristic for a girl to fantasize and experience deep feelings regarding the one she's in love with. Emotional attachment quickly forms in her, which is very strong even if there are no visible relationships yet. She's very vulnerable during this time to all kinds of mental traumas and open to deeper relationships. She can very easily be saddened and

offended, and unrequited infatuation can lead her soul to strong suffering. If she's modest and afraid to be the first to make contact with the object of her interest, then it's characteristic for her to share these experiences with her close girlfriends, and then bear unpredictable consequences of such revelations.

And if her beloved responds to her with conscious indifference or rudeness, then the girl's life and experiences become very gloomy.

If the girl keeps a diary, then it will be characteristic for her to describe all her feelings and experiences, and then analyze what's happening. If she conducts correspondence, then it will be interesting for her to reread all letters several times to delve into the depth of the embedded meaning. The girl very much needs emotional security in relationships, in which she could open up and be herself. It's very hard for her to be rejected, especially after she opens up.

Woman is created for love, which is why husbands are given the command to love their wives (Eph. 5:25), but while the girl is not married, it's characteristic for her to seek fulfillment of these needs in people, and if she doesn't receive this in her family, then she seeks it outside the home. She wants to know her true value, to be loved, unique, the very best and needed.

It's important for parents to know and understand how their daughter's inner world is arranged and how fragile it is. Based on this knowledge, it's necessary to build trusting relationships where parents should become initiators of conversations on intimate topics. Moreover, each parent should build his personal relationships and consider the openness and perception of the daughter's heart.

A girl's heart is a whole fascinating world in which father and mother can draw and create something beautiful that will be very useful for the girl in future life. But in this world something can also be destroyed that will cause pain in subsequent years. Therefore, sensitivity and caution, respect for freedom and boundaries should always be at their height.

If the most sacred has been entrusted to you, then this cannot be ridiculed or used against your daughter. If you're shocked by your girl's personal revelations or don't know what to tell her, then don't hurry with an answer, but in prayer ask God for wisdom and understanding. You won't have answers to all questions, and not all answers will want to be heard from you.

During infatuation, a girl's heart is like a bud of a beautiful flower that seeks the sun to open up to meet it. And this sun is not you, parents, but the one who occupies all her thoughts and feelings.

It's important to understand why a teenage girl falls in love. During the period of growing up, the girl's personality seeks an answer to many questions: "Who am I? Am I valuable? Am I loved?" And it's characteristic for her to seek answers to all these questions in people and in their attitude toward her. She's in search of self-affirmation, and this can become a trap for her soul if she goes to seek all these answers in the world.

The parents' task includes getting ahead of the world, directing her thoughts to Jesus, giving their daughter what her heart so needs, and telling about how many dangers and sorrows she can meet if she decides to taste the forbidden fruit. It's very dangerous to measure one's significance not through God, but through people.

It's characteristic for a girl in love to idealize her beloved's behavior, make him a hero, attribute to him what isn't in him and can't be, and then be disappointed by reality.

Emotional attachment can strongly influence mood: didn't write a response message, didn't answer the phone, didn't say hello, didn't show joy from meeting her—all this is extremely important for her and brings many experiences. And he may simply be busy with other things and didn't want to be distracted by anything.

The girl's appearance may also begin to change strongly to attract attention to herself. She may decide that beauty is the most important thing that will please the one she's thinking about, and this way she'll be noticed and appreciated faster.

But she needs to understand that by this she may begin to attract all men who have completely different goals and views.

It's important for parents to understand their daughter's experiences and consider them. Listen, delve in, ask wise questions, don't hurry to give valuable instructions. Don't laugh at her choice, but seriously delve into the essence of things and be support, trying to convey that infatuation is transient feelings that, although pleasant, quickly pass or grow into real love that never ceases and thinks about another's happiness.

Also, the thought should be conveyed to the daughter that her body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, but under the influence of infatuation, the enemy of the soul can defile this temple if she decides to give herself into the hands of the one who interests her, thinking that by becoming his without marriage obligations, she will forever belong to him and will never be abandoned.

It's important to say that although the daughter is a person, she belongs to God and has special value in His eyes. That beauty is given to her to gladden her husband, that she's a future mother and faithful friend to the one the Lord will send her when her time comes. That waiting in purity and holiness of heart will be rewarded, and she shouldn't get ahead of events and scatter herself on what now seems very important.

Questions for Reflection

1. Please read Prov. 4:23; 19:14; 31:25-26; Ps. 45:13-14; 1 Thess. 4:3-4; 1 Pet. 3:4; Song of Songs 2:10; 8:4; Isa. 54:13; Titus 2:4-5; Heb. 13:4; 1 Pet. 1:14-16,22, in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What was revealed to you in this chapter?
4. Are you ready for the fact that one day your daughter will love someone more than you?
5. How to teach your daughter to distinguish love from emotional dependence?
6. Who should tell your daughter about boundaries in relationships if you remain silent?

7. How easy is it today for a girl to destroy her purity without even noticing it?
8. What will happen to a girl's self-esteem if she's made to understand that she's "not good enough"?
9. How to explain to your daughter that she's not merchandise, but a treasure in God's eyes?
10. How to teach your daughter to distinguish tender words from impure intentions?
11. Does your daughter see you as support or as a judge?
12. Are you able to embrace a deceived daughter even if there's shame and fear in her eyes?
13. How to create in your daughter an understanding that her value doesn't depend on boys' opinions?
14. Are you ready to pray for your daughter's heart every day—even if it seems that everything is under control?

A Father's Letter to His Daughter in Love

Parents don't always know how to correctly approach their teenager. They don't always have understanding of what and how to say correctly. Not all teenagers are inclined to communicate with their parents, and each case should be considered individually. But there's a classic way of communication and conveying needed information to the right person—this is writing letters. Paper will endure everything. Although it has become unfashionable now to write letters by hand, no one has canceled this method, and it has its influence and meaning. A letter can convey the spiritual mood of the author, and recorded thoughts can be much deeper than we imagine. In a letter you can speak heart to heart and express what the tongue won't turn to say.

A teenager in love is not always open to trusting conversations with his parents, and parents don't always take interest in the teenager's personal life, considering that they will definitely be told something important, and the rest is not their business. But it's exactly here that wise intervention of experienced people is needed, who understand the whole situation as a whole and can help with their wise instructions.

One father decided to put on paper all his thoughts and concerns about his 16-year-old daughter's infatuation, and his words helped the young girl see her feelings differently. We present to you the text of this letter:

"My dear girl, peace to you.

Lately suspicion has crept into my heart that you're in love with someone. Although you try to hide this, believe me, mom and I noticed this immediately without extra comments from you. We also experienced such a time and know how beautiful it can be when it's under the control of reason, and at the same time what danger this can create if feelings begin to govern your reason and will. This feeling can inspire you and make everything around rosy, but it can also blind you to let your life go downhill.

Although you're already considered grown up, I think you don't yet have enough experience to understand people and your feelings. As your father, I would like to get acquainted with the one you're in love with, or at least find out what kind of person this is.

I'll ask you several questions that you need to answer for yourself:

- Does this person attract you to God or lead you away from Him?
- Does he respect your purity, your boundaries, your soul?
- Do you become better next to him or do you lose yourself in him?
- Do his words correspond to his actions?
- Is he ready to take responsibility for caring for you?
- Does he think about your happiness?

I understand how good it is for you now and how much you want to be loved by the one you're in love with. But know that you're already loved by me and mom. The Heavenly Father loves you so much that He gave His beloved Son for you. God's love is what you can build any relationships on and carry out any plans.

I want to assure you that your infatuation can give beautiful moments, bring quick joy here and now, but this is not yet love, although it can become it. Love knows how to wait, it respects another person's freedom, it chooses to love even when this seems impossible, but it doesn't deprive of reason and doesn't lead the heart to violation of God's principles.

God gave you a pleasant harmonious appearance and beautiful body, and our upbringing made such a person out of you with whom it's pleasant to be near and build relationships. Your young age and your childish sincerity attract many people to you. You are a priceless treasure in God's eyes, which He wants to hand over to someone who has close relationships with Him and prays for you, even possibly not knowing you yet.

But remember that you're surrounded by a world that evaluates you as a showcase, and your body as merchandise. But you're

not merchandise, but a daughter of the Heavenly King, and Heaven values in you that purity and holiness that guards you.

Remember that men are not women, they see differently, think differently, and have their strong sides, which are special blessing for creating lasting relationships.

But if you see that your beloved doesn't have personal relationships with Jesus and doesn't belong to Him, even if he belongs to the same church, then I advise you to stay away from someone with whom you can build serious relationships. He can be a brother, comrade to you, but no more.

You're not obligated to give your heart to anyone out of sense of duty, fear of staying alone, out of pity or for kindness and attention shown to you. You're free in your choice, and you only need to wait until the Lord shows you the one He prepared for you. And until you clearly understand that this is the one who's ready to take responsibility for your life, for your future, for the family and children that the Lord will give you.

I've seen many tears from those girls who didn't want to wait, who wanted to taste the forbidden fruit, who entered relationships too early. Words cannot describe those diseases, that grief and pangs of conscience they experienced. It's terrible when you live with a stranger and always keep silent so as not to destroy the marriage. It's terrible when the heart screams from pain, and you live out of habit or from fear of staying alone. It's terrible when you have to pay with years of experiences for minutes of pleasure.

And I very much don't want you to join this army of unhappy and deceived souls. Jesus knows how to heal any wounds and diseases, but is it worth bringing yourself to them?

Remember, little daughter, that you're not alone, that I'm always nearby and ready to help you in every matter, ready to support you in any trial and protect you, know that I love you at all times. I'm given to you forever, to always love you and be your father, even when you have your own family.

You know how I love your mom and how I respect her choice in everything. We had many mistakes and problems, but we always learned to find a way out and solutions.

We didn't immediately find each other and didn't immediately decide to create a family. Our infatuation became a time of fasting and prayer for both of us, a time of studying each other and the basics of premarital relationships.

And at some point in our struggles, we clearly understood that the Lord prepared us for each other and blesses us for our union.

We don't claim to be ideal, but we love each other and love you as our dear daughter, who is now becoming adult and independent.

Soon the time will come when you'll receive complete freedom from us and can arrange your life as you want, where you want, and with whom you want.

And now I ask you to see behind all the beautiful words addressed to you from young people their true desires and motives. You're not a toy and not temporary entertainment, you're a valuable pearl, for the possession of which one can give everything. Your age is beautiful, but you still need to finish your studies and learn something before creating your family. Everything has its time. And God knows when and to whom to give you, and I would like you to evaluate yourself by God's standards and values.

I believe that your life story will be correct and interesting, filled with wise decisions and reasonable choices. May the Lord bless you.

With love, always your dad."

Questio for Reflection

1. Please read Rev. 19:7-8; Prov. 3:5-6; 4:23; 12:20; 31:30; Isa. 30:21; 2 Tim. 2:22; Song of Songs 2:7; Jer. 17:9; 1 Thess. 4:3-4; Eph. 6:4; Mal. 4:6; Eccl. 3:5; 2 Cor. 6:14, in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?

3. What was revealed to you in this chapter?
4. Do you think letters carry within them what sometimes lacks courage and wisdom in words?
5. What shouldn't be written in such letters?
6. Does your daughter feel your love more often than your rules and reproaches?
7. Do you know how to hug, bless, speak tenderly and respectfully—as the Heavenly Father does?
8. When should you start praying for your daughter's future husband?
9. Do you have fear of talking with your daughter about infatuation, feelings, physicality, and purity?
10. Do you believe that such letters can save a girl from wrong steps and fatal mistakes?
11. Should you share your story with your daughter: where and how you made mistakes, how God led you, what you regret?
12. Is it important to convey to the teenager's consciousness that happiness is not in relationships, but in faithfulness to God and His principles?
13. Should a father be an example before writing such letters?
14. What to do if the daughter doesn't want to read any letters?

A Son in Love

Infatuation is something sweet for the soul, causing a smile and approval in observers, it's a new world of emotions and experiences. And when a young man falls in love, his parents, as a rule, calm down, considering that now their son won't be drawn into bad companies and he'll think about more serious things. One can agree with this when the son is 30 years old, but when he's only 15-17, then it's worth asking for special wisdom from God and seeking opportunity for special conversations on this topic.

But before undertaking something in this direction, it's important for parents to understand what's happening with their son, what he's experiencing, why this happens differently than with girls, how to help him, and where he should make decisions himself.

I often heard stories about how some people fell in love with each other almost from kindergarten or from the school bench, and then created strong families with this chosen one. But there are only a few such cases, so we shouldn't take their experience as an example, although it would be interesting to listen.

A young man, living as a dependent in his parents' house, doesn't yet have experience in building relationships, but he already feels adult and strives for independence. But he receives true independence only when he begins to live separately and pay for everything himself, and can earn enough money to feed himself and set aside something for further plans. When he falls in love during this time, this infatuation will differ from that which comes in school years, when parents think about his sustenance.

Boys mature later than their female peers, and their emotional maturity significantly lags behind physical development, so they often can't understand their female classmates in their new claims, and girls are simply not interested in having relationships with those they've outgrown and who don't

understand them, and they're more drawn to older boys who have already managed to mature emotionally and with whom they can find common language.

But with time of growth, new hormones begin to form in the boy's organism, which actively change his thinking and worldview. He begins to look at the world differently, striving for activity and conquest dominates in him, he begins to seek his place under the sun and assert himself. Conquering girls' attention during this period is very important for him, as it helps him self-determine and learn his value as a man.

The level of various hormones can strongly influence the boy's mood and prompt him to different actions that he didn't plan to undertake. Infatuation can arise under this influence episodically and pass just as quickly. The young man is more attracted to the girl's appearance and her behavior, and is little interested in her inner world. Awareness of the girl's emotional needs comes to the young man much later.

Boys can't and don't know how to express their feelings and describe what's happening in their consciousness with words. It can be difficult for them to understand this whirlpool of experiences, they suffer greatly from pains in growing parts of the body, and they very much need during this and subsequent time a wise mentor who understands what's happening to them and can explain all internal processes. And their first mentors in this sphere should be parents, who should first have an idea of how and by what laws their son's development occurs. And their son may look cold and be like a hedgehog, but not because he's like that, but because he's embarrassed by his experiences and doesn't understand all internal processes. But when he hears an exact description of all his hidden feelings, his heart calms down, and he understands that everything is going according to plan and it's not worth worrying so much.

It's characteristic for a boy to perceive love for a girl as achieving a goal. He, by his nature, is a hunter, conqueror, and provider, and for him conquering a heart means much more than relationships. This is how he asserts himself in his strength and abilities and is ready to fall in love with several

interesting objects at once, and behaves sincerely with each new girl, not understanding that he's playing with feelings, not promising anything serious in return.

For him at the moment of another conquest, the opinion and evaluation of his friends may be much more valuable than the expectations of the charmed girl, who thinks she has met her prince. And how sad when under the influence of this spirit a young man creates a family to prove something to someone.

But besides self-assertion, the young person can actually fall in love and cling with thoughts to the one who particularly pleases him. And not knowing how to behave in such a case, he can express his feelings very foolishly and inadequately, for example through teasing, pulling pigtails, and strange behavior. Also this feeling can be expressed in desire to surprise, help, serve, make an impression.

Any mockery about infatuation is perceived very painfully by the boy. He doesn't yet understand how beautiful this state is within correct boundaries, and the opinion of equally ignorant peers creates a certain stereotype in his mind, and instead of discussing what's happening with someone, he hides in his shell and doesn't know what to do with this. And any rejection of his sincere feelings he can perceive as a nail in the lid of his coffin and worry very much, considering himself needed by no one.

The enemy of the soul knows the structure of the teenager's thinking and their vulnerability at this age, and at a convenient moment sends suitable temptation, up to suicidal thoughts, just to destroy the young soul or ruin the future. The young man can, under the influence of evil forces, begin to confuse love with lust and develop intimate images and scenes in his thoughts, which will lead to desire to try this in practice or begin practicing sensuality.

Believing parents pray much for their children, and this has its influence on the growing mind. But if they studied their child's needs, prayed for him, and conducted trusting and explanatory conversations, then their influence toward good would be much greater and more effective.

For a young man, recognition of his masculine strength and respect of peers mean much more than the need to be valuable and loved. And having significance in the girl's eyes is the most cherished desire, in which he feels like a hero-winner. In someone such a spirit can be expressed like this: "I love myself, and for this I need you." And so far we're talking about innocent experiences without sexual experience. There's a storm in his heart, and a mass of stereotypes and worldly values in his consciousness, with which it's difficult for him to cope without wise instruction.

God put such difference into young men so that through these interesting feelings He could prepare their hearts for more serious and responsible relationships. So that at this age they would experience the riot of eyes and flood of feelings without causing great harm to themselves and others.

God's word, which teaches the young man to keep his path pure, helps him orient himself in such experiences and allows God to give answers to all his "whys." And God wisely uses parents and mentors, useful books and pure sources of information to teach seeking children.

Questions for Reflection

1. Please read Titus 2:6-7; Prov. 14:12; 19:2; 20:29; 28:26; Eccl. 11:9; 12:1; 2 Tim. 2:22; Jer. 17:9; Hos. 4:11; 1 Cor. 13:11, in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What was revealed to you in this chapter?
4. Why did God create in man the ability to fall in love?
5. How does infatuation differ from real love?
6. Why can infatuation blind a person?
7. What dangers can infatuation hold for a young man?
8. How to understand that a young man has matured for serious feelings?
9. Why shouldn't one play with the feelings of people of the opposite sex?
10. How does God want and can use infatuation for a teenager's spiritual growth?

11. What would you advise a son who fell in love and doesn't know what to do?
12. How not to get carried away by feelings to the point of losing reason?
13. Is it worth understanding the difference between female and male thinking before beginning to instruct one's children?
14. How can one invite God into the sphere of one's feelings and relationships?

The Danger of Infatuation for a Teenager

However many smiles and merriment their teenager's infatuation may cause parents, it's still necessary to take this event in young people's lives very seriously, as it can represent great danger, which in the absence of wise instruction can become destructive for body and soul. There are general dangers that are the same both in daughters' lives and in sons' lives: the teenager becomes a hostage of his feelings and allows them to lead him where his life can be destroyed. Such dangers can become pangs of conscience for incomprehensible feelings and fear of God's punishment for the heart turning attention to a person of the opposite sex. But when the teenager learns that this is a normal growth process and these thoughts can and should be controlled, it's easier for him to pass through this time and direct thinking in the right direction.

Infatuation can take possession of consciousness to such a degree that interest in spiritual life, in studies, in fulfilling domestic duties, in one's hobby will be lost, and all time will be occupied by thoughts about the object of one's interest, phone conversations with him, or correspondence with this person. The danger of losing life orientations and goals increases, and any attempt by parents to interfere in this situation will be met with hostility and cause anger, offense, irritation, and other negativity. In this and similar cases, open dialogue in the spirit of love and understanding from close mentors helps, explanation of what these feelings are, how to recognize them, distinguish them, and how to manage them.

Also infatuation can put the chosen person in God's place and make him an idol of one's attention, attributing divine character and soul qualities to the object of one's interest. The teenager becomes blind in his worldview and doesn't want to see anything except imagined ideals. And such perception can't continue forever, but eyes can open too late, when much has been done and much can no longer be returned or corrected.

Since the teenager doesn't have knowledge and experience of close relationships with the opposite sex, friendship with

depraved people can form a perverted taste for sensual pleasures, which will attract the mind not to discovering personality and an unexplored planet in a person, but to using him as a source of pleasure and satisfaction of one's lusts, desires, and whims. Such spirit leads the soul to thirst for sensuality, which can lead the teenager to the sin of fornication, petting, or masturbation.

For clarification: Fornication is sexual relations outside marriage; Petting is intimate closeness without sexual intercourse, in which one partner satisfies the desires of another; Masturbation is independent stimulation of sexual organs for the purpose of obtaining sexual pleasure without the participation of a second person. All this is destructive for body, soul, and spirit, deprives of the right to Eternal life, damages consciousness, steals life's joy, and brings pangs of conscience, if there still is one.

Such pastime has nothing in common with love and doesn't bring happiness to people in love, but becomes temptation and a direct path to obtaining sexual experience outside marriage, which entails unpredictable consequences in the form of obsession, extramarital pregnancy, venereal diseases, pangs of conscience, low self-esteem.

But the most dangerous thing in all this is that the teenager receives certain personal experience, and a behavior model forms in his mind: he sees in the opposite sex not a soul and personality, but a body and merchandise, and puts his "I want" above God's laws. And then transfers this model to all subsequent relationships. And it can happen that for self-assertion, the number of faithful friends won't be considered, but the quantity of sexual partners.

Also infatuation can cause emotional instability in the teenager's soul and create "emotional swings," where he can be at the peak of euphoria, and after descend to deep apathy, then again soar to the height of feelings and fantasies and crash into another disappointment.

Not having clear understanding of what agape-love represents and how important it is for it to be in any relationships, the teenager can take any counterfeit for love and consider his feelings something correct, but incomprehensible due to frequent changes. Modern films, books, and TV shows very successfully lead young people into delusion regarding pure love, thereby depriving the young soul of solid foundation on God's principles. But biblical truths have creative power in themselves and can give confidence where there's no understanding of what's happening.

Infatuation can form unhealthy emotional attachment to another person, which will make his forgetting difficult: all others will be worse, and building new relationships will be impossible. Such a state deprives of freedom both the infatuated personality and the object of this infatuation. And any partner not experiencing such attachment will want to quickly free himself from such pressure and have personal freedom in building normal relationships.

And when the object of infatuation shows interest in other people of his or opposite sex and stops devoting his time to the infatuated person, this can cause in the teenager's heart jealousy, annoyance, tears, offense, fear, feeling of rejection, be regarded as betrayal and infidelity, which can push toward revenge or suicidal thoughts.

Open and undisguised infatuation of another teenager can cause feelings of pride and significance, which will form false self-esteem based on the opinion that he's better than others, rather than on the value of inner soul qualities.

Infatuation of a believing teenager with a worldly person is fraught with God's child involuntarily adopting worldly values for the sake of the one who so gladdens the heart. And even if in the depth of heart he dreams that his love will turn the unbelieving person to God, in reality everything happens, as a rule, exactly the opposite. Living worldly is always easier, and this requires no sacrifice.

An infatuated person can also become a victim of manipulations from the one who is not indifferent to him. Demands for gifts, money, entertainment, special attention, tenderness and caresses, otherwise—breaking off relationships—this is ordinary practice of manipulators, which catches many in the trap of fear of being abandoned.

One sad experience of unrequited or deceived infatuation can create a stereotype that all people are like this, and therefore it's better not to risk anymore and live alone.

What can parents do to avert all these and other dangers from their teenagers?

The best and most correct thing is to acquaint children with God from earliest childhood and begin telling teenagers about all problems and changes before they begin, before the world presents all these things in its own way in its own manner. Involve in service, in sports activities, while praying that the Lord would preserve their consciousness, help them understand laws of development, and protect from evil communities. Explain that falling in love is beautiful if you behave purely, friendly, honestly, don't hurry anywhere, and don't fear anything.

Questions for Reflection

1. Please read Prov. 29:18; Rom. 12:9; Col. 3:5-6; 2 Sam. 11:2-5; Judg. 14:1-3; 16:1,5; Gen. 39:7-9; 1 John 4:7-8; Luke 17:1-2, in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What was revealed to you in this chapter?
4. From where should the teenager receive correct information about what happens to him during infatuation and how good and dangerous this is?
5. How does the world present infatuation?
6. Can the teenager instead of parents talk about his feelings with God? What's the difference?
7. How can the teenager's infatuation affect his prayer, studies, service, and attitude toward parents?
8. Why, as a rule, does first infatuation always pass?

9. Why does God call to keep oneself, one's thoughts, and one's body in purity until marriage?
10. Why is it dangerous to build relationships only on feelings?
11. How to show the teenager an example of real love?
12. Why doesn't real love hurry, manipulate, and thirst for attention?
13. How do I speak with the teenager about chastity and purity without pressure, but with spiritual depth?
14. Do I hear my teenager—or only demand obedience from him?

A Father's Letter to His Son in Love

"Dear son,

How I rejoice for you, watching how you're growing up at 16, how you're growing and how you delve into many things to understand how they work. I'll say honestly, you're becoming smarter than me in many things, stronger than me and more resourceful. And I'm not going to compete with you or get upset that you do something better—I can only rejoice that you succeed at it better than me.

And mom and I also noticed that you're in love. Your behavior, your smiles when reading messages, your long phone conversations, your new habits of caring for your appearance shout to us that you have a girlfriend whom you're not indifferent to. Don't fear this feeling—this is normal at your age, we also experienced this spring in our youth. This says that you're growing up and entering a new stage of relationships where you'll need to learn much. Yes, infatuation is the first step of that very great love, which is worth you understanding what this is and allowing yourself to figure this out.

But if we compare these concepts, then infatuation is not yet love, but a very pleasant experience that's more like weather. When the sun shines, warm wind blows, then you feel good and cozy, and it's so comfortable to live. But you don't build weather, but abide in it and get maximum pleasure from its cozy manifestations. And when bad weather happens, you want to hide, run away, find a secluded spot or put on protective clothing so as not to get wet and freeze.

Love is like building a house, in which you first study construction laws, then decide what you need, consult with the one who decides to build this house together with you, and proceed to laying the foundation so that all subsequent construction will withstand. Something good and kind isn't built quickly—this requires much time and strength, knowledge and desires. And then all your life this needs to be kept clean, periodically something needs to be added, something repaired,

and something thrown out. The house needs to be protected from water, fire and bad weather, but at the same time have clean water inside, cozy fire and warm atmosphere.

Mom and I taught you very important and necessary things from birth, and now we see how this upbringing formed a free person out of you, who delves into the essence of things, has his own point of view, his own tastes and views on life. We also passed this path and now are a bit further than you, and therefore respect your choice.

Watching you, we sincerely rejoice at everything new that happens with you, but infatuation brings a new person into your life whom you don't know, who may not meet your expectations and what you imagine. But we ask you to remember that you're dealing with a living soul named woman, who has a heart and feelings, who, like you, is only entering adult life and doesn't know much, but wants to understand everything and have personal experience. Look at her as a personality who thinks not like you, behaves completely differently and is a complete opposite to you. And accept this as a fact that shouldn't be adjusted to yourself.

Don't let your new feelings take possession of you to such a degree that they begin to control you. Infatuation should be under control of your reason and will. God put this beautiful experience in you, and He will give you strength to humble any fire that will burn in you and try to burn all boundaries and rules.

Purity is the absence of dirt. Don't bring into your new relationships what the Lord doesn't approve of or forbids doing outside marriage. Don't let your new experiences deprive you of reason.

I can assure you that however good it may be for you in each other's company—this euphoria will someday pass, it can grow into more serious relationships and place responsibility on you or make you understand that you don't suit each other as a future family. And so that this won't be painful for you, make a decision now to be friends and relate kindly to each other, even

if your paths diverge. Write this on paper—this decision will help you very much and be useful.

God gave you infatuation to test you, so that you yourself would see what you have in priority and what's more important for you. He's not against you being friends with girls and making serious plans for the future, but the Lord wants to understand where and in what place He will be in these plans. Will you take Him into your new relationships and will you consult with Him about what's good and what's bad?

From my personal experience I'll say: with God everywhere is good, and everywhere He blesses when you put Him in first place. The Lord knows who suits you best, so don't hurry to get ahead of events, but study the one who now occupies your thoughts and feelings. Figure out what kind of relationships this girl has with Jesus, whether she's taught to live in the purity of God's word. Does God stand in first place with her and how firm she is in biblical principles. In answer to your prayers the Lord will give you answers to all these questions and show more than you think.

When you were just born, mom and I dedicated you to God and prayed that He would choose and prepare the very best wife for you, and at the right time bring her to you and give you correct feelings. The Lord heard all our requests, and believe us—has already begun to answer our prayers. But He also respects your choice and won't give you someone against your will. We would be glad to know that you also pray for your future family, because answers to such prayers carry the greatest prospects.

Your mom and I also asked God for each other and prayed very seriously even when we were strongly in love with each other, to understand whether the Lord would approve our union. Judge for yourself how God answered.

I want to ask you a question: imagine that your girlfriend is someone's own sister. And how do you think, does her brother want to see her deceived and used by someone for personal pleasure? Would you want your sister to become someone's toy for a short time, and then suffer from this all her life? Do your

parents want your life and happiness to be destroyed by foreign hands before they begin?

I'll tell you a secret: your mom is so beautiful that I constantly fall in love with her and don't know what to do with this. She's such a wonderful woman that I think I'm luckier with her than she is with me. But apparently she's not indifferent to me either. And it all began with us deciding in our friendship and infatuation not to allow what we could enjoy after in lawful marriage. And we succeeded in continuing communication without extra sensual pleasures, although sometimes we very much wanted to cross this boundary when we were alone.

In our infatuation we didn't abandon studies and work, service and domestic duties, we didn't worry if we couldn't meet or when we went away for long periods on important business. And when our infatuation grew into love, we understood that we couldn't do without a wedding. And you see what came of this.

With love, Your dad"

Questions for Reflection

1. Please read Luke 1:3-4; Deut. 8:2; Matt. 5:8; 6:33; Job 31:1; Prov. 1:8-9; 3:5-6; 18:20; 23:24; 31:30; Eccl. 12:1; 2 Cor. 6:14; Jer. 29:11, in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What did you experience reading this lesson?
4. Why did God allow in man the ability to fall in love before marriage?
5. What dangers can be hidden in romantic feelings?
6. How can infatuation accelerate or slow down spiritual development?
7. What's more important—to be loved or to know how to love?
8. What does true respect for a girl's heart and her future consist of?
9. Is it necessary to pray for your child's future family while he's still small?
10. Why does love without God become dangerous?

11. Why is it so important that the father understands, knows, and respects his son's feelings?
12. Why is marriage not only love, but also covenant, duties, service, and sacrifice?
13. What does it mean to "seek a life companion in the Lord"?
14. Is it worth writing such letters to one's children?

Where to Go to Study?

In adolescence, a situation arises when the teenager must decide where to go to study after finishing several grades or after graduating from school. In different countries this happens differently, but the principle of further education is the same everywhere: the teenager must receive education either in school itself, or in vocational school, college, university, where he can enter after a certain age.

The choice of this path, as a rule, should be in the teenager's power, who by personal interests should decide what's truly close to his heart, how special education can be useful in further life, whether he'll be in demand with his new specialty.

For parents, this period is also a time of special prayers and wise influence. They have more experience and vision in understanding prospects and dangers of this or that direction, and their timely instructions are extremely important for the teenager.

The teenager is influenced by those who are nearby, who are already studying, parents' stories, and he may under the influence of these people choose not what he needs.

There are general factors that are important to consider when choosing further studies:

- is this educational institution and its diploma recognized by the state?
- is the received diploma recognized in other countries?
- what kind of educational program takes place: theoretical, practical, combined study with work?
- is there tuition payment or is this a budget program where the state pays for everything, and do they give the student a scholarship?
- will the teenager find work in his received specialty upon graduation from this institution?
- what spiritual atmosphere surrounds the students?
- is there bullying among students of those who are not like everyone else, or who someone doesn't like?

Also these educational institutions can be divided by different directions: serving people, serving God, working with hands, social work, power structures, teaching professions, research, creative specialties, legal education, civil service, and others.

The choice of a new place of study can become a turning point in the teenager's life, where he will make a decision to go into the world with its tempting prospects or continue his life in union with God and be faithful to biblical principles despite everything. And this choice, as a rule, doesn't mature in one moment, although it can happen under the influence of other people who will come and tell about interesting aspects of the proposed education.

In Germany, for example, for all schoolchildren from age 15, they practice such a program once a year: the student must find a place for practice and for two weeks visit the chosen institution, performing assigned work or being present at other people's work. After which he receives a reference from the employer and continues his studies at school.

Also during school holidays, students may have the right to official part-time work at various enterprises up to four weeks a year. In other cases, during holidays, schoolchildren are offered various activities like language courses, camp meetings with trips to nature, all kinds of clubs and sections, volunteer work, acquaintance with science, and much more.

The world is very diverse in its offers, and state programs supporting young people amaze with their breadth and scope. But one shouldn't draw children's attention only to secular things. Where there's possibility of organizing church projects and camp meetings with participation of children and teenagers, parents need to pay attention to such events and attend them together with children or give teenagers to the care of wise mentors. Such camp or trip events introduce teenagers to each other, help see many spiritual things in a new way, live in extreme conditions, plunge into spiritual atmosphere, and make important decisions.

In many countries where there's religious freedom, believing people organized their spiritual educational institutions, which offer a wide spectrum of new professions in demand in serving people.

Teaching a teenager in these institutions can become protection from the world's influence and acquisition of new skills in spiritual life.

A person studying the science of salvation as a curriculum receives more knowledge in this area than those who occasionally come into contact with the Bible.

In ancient Israel, in Jesus' time, it was customary to teach young people spiritual things in synagogues, but besides this, every teenager had to master some work with hands and be able to do something professionally. It was believed that if a person wasn't familiar with physical labor, then he wouldn't be a reliable servant in the spiritual sphere. And the ability to work with hands gave people the opportunity to earn their bread with them in critical situations. From Jesus' life we know that until age 30 He worked in a carpentry workshop and knew how to do what His father Joseph taught Him. But working with hands, Jesus always found and allocated time for spiritual activities and for communication with God.

Any work with hands that teaches something and adds something to life experience will be useful for any student, and it would be wise to choose such educational institutions where they combine humanities with professional physical activity.

There's such a concept: "Lifestyle diseases." And this should also be paid attention to when choosing a future profession or direction in education, so that a sedentary lifestyle doesn't become the cause of subsequent occupational diseases.

Not every teenager knows what he really needs. And he may change one educational institution for another or completely refuse to study. This is normal practice, and one shouldn't panic about this. It's better to change what doesn't suit in time than to regret wasted years of life later.

To avoid mistakes in correctly choosing a place for further study, parents need to determine their child's abilities and inclinations before adolescence and conduct conversations about choosing future study or work, listening to what the child chooses. In adolescence these inclinations may change, and it's important for parents to take this into account.

There's a difference between "want" and "must." If a young person dreams of becoming a doctor or musician, do everything possible to help him achieve this goal. Don't force him to go where his place isn't. If he doesn't want to enter spiritual seminary, then don't frighten him with all kinds of curses. Studying against one's will at parents' direction isn't very correct and useful. Let the teenager decide what he needs himself and set a goal to achieve this. And parents' task includes helping in forming independence and personal responsibility in their teenagers.

It's worth asking leading questions: "What are you ready to do for free?"; "How do you see yourself in the future?"; "What especially captures you?"; "What will you do with pleasure without coercion?"

Prayer with the teenager about his further study gives God authority to influence and open those paths that without prayer would be inaccessible.

The choice of educational institution isn't just a step toward a new profession, but an important decision where the teenager's personality, character, maturity, and independence are formed. This path may not be simple, but with God's help, parents' support, and correct inner attitude, it will lead to a blessed future.

Questions for Reflection

1. Please read Dan. 1:8,12-20; Luke 2:52; Mark 6:3; Matt. 6:33; Prov. 4:7; 16:9; Isa. 30:21; Hos. 4:6; Acts 17:11; 18:3; 2 Thess. 3:10; Eph. 6:4, in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What was revealed to you in this chapter?

4. How to inspire a teenager to correctly choose a worthy place for further study?
5. Is it necessary to pray for your teenager's future profession? If yes, then how?
6. How to understand your teenager's tastes, desires, and dreams before he begins seeking a further place to continue his studies?
7. Do you often consult with your teenager to learn his opinion and plans for the future, or is it better to give instructions and monitor their fulfillment?
8. What's the difference between a prestigious educational institution and a desired one?
9. Why is the choice of further education the most important event in a teenager's life?
10. What to do if the teenager wants to enter paid education, but you don't have money to pay for it?
11. Should you let the teenager leave home to move to a new place of study if it's located very far away?
12. What to do if the teenager can't enter where he would like to?
13. The teenager's further education or choice of new profession —is this his personal business or the whole family's business?
14. Is God interested in choosing a new place of study for your teenager?

Oh, This Work

The time comes when by age the teenager gains the right to work and can earn money with his hands. By law in many countries this is permitted from ages 15-16, but with limited working time, as the young organism isn't yet accustomed to heavy loads, and consciousness doesn't yet understand the imposed responsibility.

A teenager's work activity isn't just external activity and the opportunity to earn, but the formation of his soul and character, tastes, worldview, and spiritual maturity. This is the final transition to adult, independent life with personal responsibility before others and with many prospects that previously seemed very distant. The teenager begins to understand the value of money and the value of his efforts in acquiring it. Instead of allotted pocket money, he receives what he invested his labor and knowledge in. This process humbles, teaches much, and shows that he isn't the center of the Universe where everyone takes care of him, but part of a large community where everyone is busy with useful business.

A teenager's work activity is a multi-layered topic affecting spiritual, mental, and physical spheres of life, forming correct understanding of himself and the surrounding world. This isn't something new for the teenager, as many of his acquaintances have already shared their work experience, but when the young person himself plunges into the world of work, he makes many new discoveries and frees himself from egocentric peculiarities.

God didn't create man for idle life. Even one of the commandments says: "Six days you shall labor and do all your work..." (Ex. 20:9).

Wise parents from earliest childhood accustom their children to work—these can be household and domestic duties, as well as work outside the home or participation in church projects, where the child becomes acquainted with the real world and its concerns.

There's a difference between simply assigning some work to the teenager, checking its completion and stopping there, and explaining the benefit of such labor, praising, telling why this is important, and asking whether it was interesting for the son or daughter to complete the task. There are certain tasks, but there's also motive—and it plays an important role in personality formation. Everything done with joy and from the heart brings satisfaction to body and consciousness.

Certain hormones are placed in us that bring deep satisfaction to the soul from completed work and awareness of the value of one's labor.

When the teenager sees the fruit of his labor or can touch it, dopamine is produced in his body, which rewards the mind with special joy.

When the young worker realizes the benefit of his labor, serotonin is produced in the organism, bringing the soul feelings of value, need, and acceptance.

If the teenager works in fresh air, experiences physical load, is in pleasant company where they love to joke and inspire each other, endorphin is produced in his organism—the hormone of joy, creating wonderful mood. Even after heavy labor the teenager can feel lightness and satisfaction.

When the young worker receives praise, kind embraces, and feeling of being needed, oxytocin is produced in his body—the hormone of love and friendship.

Payment for work is also a powerful stimulus prompting a person to work even in cases when the work itself isn't to his liking. If physical labor is well paid, zeal and enthusiasm appear, and you wonder how ordinary pieces of paper can inspire great deeds. But there's nothing more destructive than promise of payment and subsequent deception with withholding earned funds.

If the teenager isn't accustomed to working with hands and hasn't seen an example in his home, if he doesn't understand the meaning of his work, if he spends most of his time on social

networks or computer games, if he doesn't receive praise and reward for work—he's unlikely to develop zeal for work. And exit from such a state of mind doesn't happen in one day.

Training for work can begin with small things—by the principle: "It was empty—it became beautiful." Don't expect big results—give small assignments, but so that the teenager sees the result of his work.

If he prepared something in the kitchen—enjoy the result aloud, praise the young cook, tell friends how deliciously you were fed. This forms in the teenager's consciousness love for work and awareness of being needed.

It's useful to teach the teenager to do everything with quality, as for the Lord, even if the work isn't paid or evaluated in money. Such an approach forms correct thinking. Encourage striving for qualification improvement, for learning new types of work, for accepting responsibility.

Attentive attitude toward work and explanation of the benefit of any work can become a powerful stimulus. For example:

- "It's shameful not to clean up dirt after yourself, but to live in dirt."
- "By cleaning the house, you make it cozy and beautiful."
- "You sewed such a beautiful outfit today—I think such things are hard to find in stores."
- "You helped me so much in the kitchen—I can't imagine how I would have managed without you."
- "Can you imagine how much joy those people are now experiencing whom you helped today!"

Let your words be truthful and correspond to what they're said for.

The Bible also contains many words of support and praise for those who work with their hands. Read them to your children—let them know how God values work.

It's worth paying attention to dangers connected with the teenager's work activity. It's important that in pursuit of money he doesn't abandon studies, that money doesn't become the

meaning of life. That the chosen work doesn't undermine health and doesn't destroy the psyche. That consciousness isn't controlled by fear of losing work. That he doesn't become proud from prosperity, doesn't begin saving money for the sake of accumulation, that work doesn't displace spiritual and family values. That overwork or stress from difficult conditions doesn't occur.

Timely questions, instructions, and communication about this or that work can change much and help the teenager look at what's happening in a new way.

It's important that the teenager sees spiritual direction and meaning of his work, because without spiritual goals work can become a trap for the soul and give distorted meaning to everything he does.

It's important that work doesn't become an idol or substitute for spiritual values. But at the same time it shouldn't become punishment or heavy duty. Healthy work helps the teenager see his value, significance, receive satisfaction and joy, which inspires him for further work. It's worth remembering that physical work is part of worship to God, as the wise Creator who put such wonderful laws into human nature.

Correct attitude toward work will help the teenager enter adult life with dignity with firm confidence and acquired skills, and not fear those trials that growing up will offer him.

Wise parents not only encourage their children's work activity, but also help them find spiritual meaning and joy of service in work. Remember: how the teenager relates to work today will largely determine his future attitude toward life, family, and God in subsequent life.

Questions for Reflection

1. Please read Gen. 2:15; Col. 3:23; Prov. 6:6-8; 10:4; 13:4; 14:23; 22:29; Eccl. 3:13; 5:12; 9:10-11; 1 Cor. 10:31; 2 Thess. 3:10; James 5:4; Eph. 4:28, in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What was revealed to you in this chapter?

4. Why did God give man the commandment to work even before the fall?
5. What connection exists between work and worship of God?
6. How to understand the expression "work as for the Lord" in modern conditions?
7. What character traits does physical work develop that are impossible to obtain another way?
8. What inner qualities are formed when the teenager overcomes unwillingness to work?
9. How to teach the teenager to find joy in any work?
10. What to do if the teenager works only under compulsion?
11. How to help the teenager not lose spiritual values in pursuit of material success?
12. How to resist the negative influence of consumer society on the teenager?
13. How does work experience in adolescence affect all further life?
14. How to help the teenager find his calling through work?

Teenage Bullying

Bullying is systematic harassment, humiliation, or insult of one teenager or group of teenagers directed at another teenager. Unfortunately, such a phenomenon increasingly takes place in school institutions, and parents need to understand the cause of these actions and how to resist this. Your teenager can become a victim of such violence, he can also be an aggressor (bully), or he can take a passive observer position, which makes him part of the bully's team.

Bullying is evil that needs to be resisted at all levels, but not with retaliatory cruelty, but with a wise approach to this problem.

One shouldn't make the bully an outright scoundrel for whom prison weeps. No one specifically taught him such cruelty, and it can be a consequence of his personal problems with which he cannot cope independently. As a result, for self-realization he finds someone weaker and begins to harass him. And other classmates, accustomed to watching such scenes on the internet, are already taught to be passive viewers, and they're simply interested to know how this will end. It's not excluded that after harassing one, someone from the viewers could become the next.

Harassment can affect both young men and young women.

In many European countries, anti-bullying laws and rules are adopted in schools that protect the child's personality at his first appeal to appropriate authorities.

Bullying is not only a problem of victim and aggressor, but of the whole collective, including teachers.

A teenager who is taught how to behave correctly in such a situation will be able to resist with dignity this evil directed against him and not allow it to develop in relation to other classmates.

A bully is not the embodiment of courage and bravery, but a person trying to solve his inner problems by seeking a weaker

victim. And if he doesn't meet resistance in his claims, then he becomes embittered and becomes bold and impudent, taking this behavior model into all other aspects of his life.

The principle of how bullying works is very simple: there's an attack on personality with the aim of destroying personal boundaries and bringing pain, fear, and offense. The aggressor feeds his strength at the expense of his victim's negative emotions. At first this looks like a trial attack by reconnaissance. There's probing of weak and strong sides, cautious jokes and insignificant mockery. If this works and the soul's protective boundaries collapse, then the bully feels his power and allows the enemy of the soul to use him as an instrument of destruction.

It would be wrong to respond with cursing to cursing and insult to insults. These are not the best methods of defense. The enemy of the soul wants to act through the victim too, and sends her such solutions that will make her more vulnerable for subsequent harassment. Tears, fear, grief, offense, anger, curses—these are victory trophies that enrich the aggressor and feed his self-love, making him a hero in the viewers' eyes.

It's important to teach the teenager self-control and establishing personal boundaries before someone begins to violate them. Stories that such cruel practice exists among children and teenagers and takes place even in some churches should be voiced by parents in personal conversation with children. This shouldn't be feared, as this evil can be effectively resisted and this topic can be closed at the root forever.

When the "supposed victim" hears insults or humiliations addressed to him, then this needs to be stopped through a statement about one's boundaries and dignity, without retaliatory insult.

For example:

- "It's unpleasant for me to hear such things from you!"
- "Thank you for telling me this, I'll take it into account"
- "I know I'm not yet perfect, and you're right in your assessment!"

- "What do you like about me?"

A teenager who knows his worth, who is loved by parents, who knows how to love and be friendly, will be taught by God at the right time and will receive special wisdom on how to resist this evil.

Jesus gave us an example of a Victor, and even His killers looked at Him with admiration and respect, fearing only that He would manifest His divine power against them.

Also the presence of faithful friends who will take the victim's side in such harassment will quickly destroy all the aggressors' plans.

Respect for the bully, absence of fear and retaliatory aggression will deprive him of desire to continue his ungodly actions.

But it may also be that your teenager will show weakness and allow himself to be humiliated, and allow a group of his peers to mock him. If parents noticed this and established the violator's identity, it's not a fact that their emotional intervention will protect their child. Here the problem concerns the whole collective, including teachers and school administration. And this problem will need to be solved more globally than intimidating the bully with cruel punishment in case of continued harassment.

Sometimes changing schools can become the best solution to this problem, as many teachers themselves create conditions for such situations.

Bullying destroys the teenager's psyche and health. This can cause depression, mental disorders, self-isolation, lack of interest in studies, decreased academic performance, and even thoughts of suicide. And in response to parents' desire to understand this, he will show irritation and aggression.

Why do teenagers behave so cruelly toward others? The answer is simple: "And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold" (Matt. 24:12). Absence of love at home, in friendship, in relationships spills over into such "entertainment" that's directed not only against believing children, but against

those who don't know how to resist this and where to seek protection.

It's also worth not confusing bullying with beatings. A child being beaten by other children is a criminal offense, and it's necessary to react to this immediately by contacting police. Authorities have many levers of influence for stopping such violations. God often uses law enforcement to protect His chosen ones through secular laws.

Trusting relationships with Jesus, a loving home atmosphere, desire to be friendly with everyone make any teenager invulnerable to such attacks from the enemy of the soul.

Bullying is a spiritual battle where good and truth oppose evil, this is a collision of light and darkness, this is an attempt by forces of darkness to suppress good feelings in a person and sow fear, insecurity, and offense in him. Every teenager has the right not to succumb to such provocations, not to use the enemy of the soul's services, but to choose that victor's path that was revealed in Christ and in His attitude toward enemies. It's important to understand that bullying is a local phenomenon, not a problem of all life. If it's impossible to change something, then you can change the situation.

God gives many promises for difficult times, and He knows how to protect His children and will be a Helper in any situation. He wants His students to be free from fear, from evil spirit, so that God's light and love would shine in them, and their lips would be filled with wisdom and grace.

Questions for Reflection

1. Please read Rom. 12:19-21; 1 Pet. 3:9; 2 Tim. 1:7; Isa. 41:10; Phil. 4:13; Matt. 11:28-29; Col. 3:12-13; Prov. 10:19; 15:1; 16:32; 18:21; 29:11; Eph. 4:2,29, in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What was revealed to you in this chapter?
4. What distinguishes bullying from ordinary conflict between teenagers?
5. Why is bullying called "systematic harassment," and what signs indicate systematicity?

6. Why does the bully choose specifically weaker victims rather than equals in strength?
7. How does modern media culture influence the formation of observer passivity, making them accomplices to many crimes?
8. Why is it important to teach the teenager protection from bullying before the problem arises?
9. What role do friends play in protection from bullying? Eccl. 4:12.
10. Why does the bullying problem concern the whole collective, including parents, teachers, and directors, and not only victim and aggressor?
11. When can parental intervention be ineffective or even harmful?
12. What role does home atmosphere play in protection from bullying?
13. How can prayer and trust in God help in a harassment situation?
14. Will God protect His children when He is asked about this?

Sports Activities

Adolescence is a time of active growth of the entire organism and its global restructuring at all levels. Muscle tissue begins to increase in size, the skeleton strengthens and grows, various hormones are produced in the body that, when released into the blood, set a certain mood. It is during this period that it is especially important to channel this energy in the right direction - including through physical activity.

Physical exercise is not just a way to release excess energy. It is a path to self-discipline, willpower development, health strengthening, and even spiritual formation. A teenager who has learned to overcome difficulties in training will more easily cope with internal conflicts, experiences, and temptations.

Not every sport provides physical exercise, and some technical sports can pose particular danger to life. For example, as a teenager, I enrolled in a parachuting section. Before we were allowed to participate in this activity, we were taught theory for several weeks, the device of parachutes was explained to us and we were taught to fold them, we were told about safety techniques and were not given any physical exercise. And when this jump finally took place, the biggest load turned out to be carrying two parachutes on the shoulders to the plane and landing on both legs with further falling to the side due to high speed. After this, it was necessary to collect the opened parachute into a bag and carry it to the collection point.

Such sports release large amounts of adrenaline into the blood and give a certain self-confidence, but are very dangerous for life and have high mortality statistics.

Engaging in any sport carries many positive results in the upbringing of a teenager's personality, as it disciplines them, distracts them from bad habits, introduces them to the diversity of the world and relationships with people, teaches them not to fear physical exercise, and trains the will to achieve results.

There are also certain dangers in receiving professional injuries that can make a teenager disabled for life. For example, broken

knees from falls or impacts, torn ligaments from unsuccessful movements, displacement of spinal discs from excessive load, all kinds of injuries and fractures from accidents or falls at high speed - all this is only a small part of the sad statistics. But despite many dangers, sport remains a sought-after activity at any age. Look at what attention the Olympic Games attract.

All sports can be divided into categories where you can quickly determine dangerous and not very dangerous ones. They are divided into individual and team sports, speed sports and those requiring endurance. These include:

- Technical
- Intellectual
- Power
- Martial arts and combat sports
- Game sports
- Extreme
- Seasonal
- Water sports
- With animal participation
- Mixed
- Traditional

When choosing and suggesting any sports activities to their child or enrolling them in a sports section, it is important for parents to remember that many sports carry a certain philosophy, conflict with the purity of God's truths, cause injuries to opponents, endow consciousness with a spirit of competition and desire to be a winner in competitions and better than others. Goal-setting itself and efforts to achieve it is good willpower training, but when this forms a cult of the body, causes competition, rivalry, or pride in one's achievements, it can become a trap for the soul.

The teenager's body should receive additional physical activity and even load on all types of muscles so that all growing parts of the body develop harmoniously, forming physical strength and disciplining willpower.

Not all parents are able to conduct individual sports activities with their child, but to occupy the active mind of a growing person, it is sometimes easier to give them a computer game or smartphone so they don't bother.

These gadgets can contribute to the production of certain hormones, but they do not form muscle mass and do not give beauty and endurance to the body.

The next factor to pay attention to is that sports activities should not distract consciousness from spiritual values and relationships with God. Christ can and should be invited to all your sports activities and exercises so that He protects from injuries, from arrogance and evil. These activities should not bring harm and injury to other people.

Any physical activity promotes the development of good blood circulation and should be accompanied by proper drinking and nutrition, with complete abstinence from harmful things and moderation in beneficial ones.

It is important that all training takes place in fresh air, with an abundance of sunlight, and does not cause stress to the body and nervous system. Reasonable alternation of physical exercise and rest gives the body strength and time for recovery and allocation of additional resources for further activity.

Sometimes, to achieve another record or do something beyond one's strength, a teenager needs to make superhuman efforts and overcome excessive loads - such things are destructive to health and are not needed in practical life. We were not created to prove to this world that we are better, stronger than others and can cause amazement. Is it worth subjecting your life and health to injuries or danger for someone else's "wow" or another like?

It is also important to remember the golden rules: "It's not the distance that exhausts, but the pace" and "Those who drop out of the race will never win, those who stay in the race will never lose."

Jesus's most beloved type of physical exercise was long-distance walking and mountain climbing. During these exercises, He received an abundance of sunlight and clean air. Now our possibilities are much broader, but brisk walking, especially after eating, remains the classic and safest type of physical exercise, thanks to which the whole body and many muscle groups receive proper nutrition and development.

It can also be noted that any types of exercises with one's own body without additional weight are a natural and safe type of sport. And the variety of exercises for strengthening and stretching muscles is amazing in its abundance.

Such things, principles, and rules do not arise in a teenager's head by themselves. It is more natural for them to see something in others, to imitate someone, to be like someone. Therefore, parents need to convey useful information about the benefits of physical exercise and the harm of big and traumatic sports before the world offers its knowledge and philosophy on this matter.

The safest exercises can be considered those where there is no aggression and fighting, where there is no cult of body, strength, victory, where there is no harsh competition, where training is conducted in a moderate but regular mode, where the teenager remains part of the family, church and spiritual life, where new friends are made and horizons are expanded, where one can give their love to other people, where strength can be applied for the benefit of other people. Good physical form is not a reason to exalt oneself, but an opportunity to be more vigorous and capable of deeds of love and service. And victory is not an end in itself. It is much more important for a teenager to learn to lose with dignity and rejoice in others' successes.

Sport should not be an end in itself or a replacement for spiritual life. Let physical activity become part of a pious life, strengthening health, will, and joy. Then both body and spirit will be directed to one thing - to life with God and for God.

Questions for Reflection

1. Please read Prov. 20:29; 1 Cor. 6:12, 19-20; 9:25-27; Rom. 12:1-2; Matt. 6:33; 1 Tim. 4:7-8; Titus 2:7; Ps. 28(29):11; James 4:6; Jer. 9:23-24, in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What was revealed to you in this chapter?
4. Why is it especially important during adolescence to channel energy in the right direction through physical activity?
5. How do physical exercises contribute not only to physical but also to spiritual formation of a teenager?
6. By what criteria should the safety of a particular sport for a teenager be evaluated?
7. Why is it important to consider not only physical but also philosophical aspects of various sports?
8. How to avoid sports achievements generating pride and superiority over others?
9. How to find balance between achieving results and maintaining health?
10. How to teach a teenager to rejoice in others' successes and not only in their own victories?
11. Why can't computer games and smartphones replace physical activity? What is the danger of gadgets?
12. What can be learned about physical activity from Jesus's example, who preferred walking and mountain climbing?
13. Why does brisk walking remain one of the safest and most effective types of physical exercise?
14. How to make good physical form not a reason for superiority, but an opportunity for more active service and love for others?

The Spiritual Life of a Teenager

Children who have been taught Christian values from childhood are usually more receptive to biblical truths during adolescence and express a desire to receive water baptism and become part of the church fellowship. This initiative comes from parents and church leaders, but it also happens that the child themselves desires to make a covenant with God and become a full member of God's people.

It has been observed that churches that have their own schools and other educational institutions statistically retain their children from going into the world. Also, those teenagers who have friends in the church are less inclined to seek friends from the world and leave their fellowship.

And yet the church and all kinds of church ministries are voluntary work and cannot be coercive and attract people against their will.

Small children can be very capricious in the mornings, and parents who are going to worship do not ask the child's consent, but simply take them under the arm and carry them where they need to go. But such a trick will not work with a teenager. They can be forced to go to a meeting, but this will cause rebellion and rejection of subsequent attendance at worship services, even if they had no such plans before.

I was a frequent witness to how zealous parents would catch their teenagers on the street when they went outside the church building to talk to each other about their affairs, and force the children with threats to stop empty talk and go to worship. As a rule, teenagers showed obedience due to having no other choice, but subsequently I noticed that they completely stopped coming to worship services and disappeared forever. And questions to their parents about where their children were now received the same answers: they say they chose the world and do not want to live with God.

And when there was an opportunity to talk with these teenagers, you understand that they had rejection not of God,

but of that wrong image that was presented about God by their parents or church ministers.

Teenagers are very sensitive to any hypocrisy, they find it disgusting to see the duplicity of those who should be representatives of Christ, but put on this mask only when it is needed to make an impression on fellow believers. And young people see everything and everyone, especially if these meetings happen outside spiritual gatherings.

What else can cause teenagers to choose the world?

- Personal absence of living faith and personal relationship with God in their parents;
- Absence of deep knowledge and understanding of God's Word and lack of understanding of what ministries are needed for;
- Formality of worship services;
- Distrust of God or disappointment in Him due to unanswered sincere prayers;
- Absence of proper youth activities in the church, where young people are involved in various ministries and a missionary spirit is cultivated in them;
- Personal sins and sinful dependencies that are condemned in the church;
- Absence of friends among peers in the church;
- Mockery and pressure from worldly friends;
- Absence of personal rebirth, understanding of God's mercy and perception of religion as a collection of rules and prohibitions;
- Strict criticism from believers for any mistakes or unusual appearance;
- Conflicts and disagreements with parents in the father's house;
- Fear of being imperfect in a society of "holy" and strict people;
- Absence of wise people who know answers to complex teenage questions;

- Conservative view of life by standards of past generations and unwillingness of church members to keep up with the times, using modern technologies to advance the Gospel;
- Too superficial attitude to truth or too complex and confusing, with incomprehensible terminology;
- Absence of practical application of truths proclaimed from the pulpit;
- Constant "must" and "you should" without love and friendship;
- Enmity of church members with each other or division of the church into family or warring clans;
- Presence of open sin in the church without attempts to condemn it or fix something;
- Harsh discipline without love and understanding of the teenager's needs;
- Gossip, discussion of others in their absence, intrigue, tale-bearing, fanaticism;
- Absence of internal motivation and understanding of why it is needed;
- No place for new ideas, creativity and implementation of one's talents.

There are many more personal and spiritual experiences that can repel not only teenagers but also adults from God. And although the church is a kind of conditional hospital for parishioners, there should also be doctors present who feel the atmosphere and know how to help whom.

The absence of youth leaders who are interested in the spiritual growth of young people and active involvement of them in missionary work can negatively affect even believing teenagers. The enemy of souls will certainly find something to occupy inquiring minds and offer them what will distract from Christ and pull into the world.

Parents often choose a church they are used to, which is closer to home or where they grew up and know everyone. But if they see that no one is working with their youth, and somewhere there is a church where young people are involved in ministry and are very friendly, then it is worth changing the

congregation for the sake of their children and showing teenagers that there are better places than where they have been going since childhood.

If a teenager has left one community to become part of another, this is normal practice, and this should be welcomed and understood that they are seeking what is close and dear to their heart. I know families who left everything and moved to live in a new place for the sake of the spiritual future of their children and were successful. But when a teenager leaves the church and God, then it is necessary to sound the alarm and not judge the young soul for such a choice, but understand the reason, which will certainly be revealed in trusting communication. If your teenager does not trust you, then find someone who knows how to communicate with young people and knows how to help them.

Remember that in addition to church matters, a teenager has many personal questions and fears that can confuse them and affect their self-esteem.

For a teenager, a society of their peers is very important, of those who are equally inexperienced and seeking, but where they will be accepted as their own. And this desire to be accepted and needed can be a priority even higher than relationships with God.

The Lord knows what young people experience, and seeks those who can correctly present God's love and the beauty of God's character to youth, so that through these people the growing generation can be accustomed to cultivating trust in God and personal relationships with the Savior.

In addition to those factors that disappoint young people in church gatherings, there are also those moments that can enchant teenagers and so attract them to God that no negativity or fanaticism of church members can push them away from following Christ.

When a person is enchanted by Jesus, has personal living relationships with Him and thirsts for greater revelations, then no one and nothing can shake their faith.

And if you consider that almost all of Jesus's disciples were young people, then you understand what interest God has in this category of humanity and what prospects the Lord has for the rising generation.

Questions for Reflection

1. Please read Prov. 22:6; Matt. 19:14; Heb. 10:24-25; 1 Sam. 2:12, 17, 22-25; Prov. 13:20; James 1:22; 1 John 3:18; Jer. 1:7; Ps. 118(119):9; Eccl. 12:1, in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What was revealed to you in this chapter?
4. Why does coercion in spiritual matters often give the opposite result?
5. What role do you think church school plays in keeping youth in faith?
6. Why is friendship among believing peers so important for teenagers?
7. What makes worship formal, and how can this be avoided?
8. Why are teenagers especially sensitive to adult hypocrisy?
9. What other reasons for teenagers leaving the church do you know?
10. How can the church compete with worldly entertainment for youth attention?
11. What questions should parents ask themselves if their teenager is leaving the church?
12. How to help a teenager transition from "parental faith" to their own?
13. What does it mean to be "enchanted by Jesus"?
14. What prospects does God see for the young generation, and how should this influence our attitude toward youth?
15. What are you personally ready to change in your attitude toward teenagers after studying this lesson?

Spiritual Faithfulness to God

Parents who begin thinking about raising their children from early childhood and invest the best knowledge and efforts into young hearts will not be left without reward for their labor. All the good and true things they sowed into young souls will surely sprout and bear abundant fruit.

Although there are isolated cases when children choose the world or evil communities corrupt good morals, in the vast majority of cases the faith transmitted to children performs cardinal transformations in their hearts.

Jesus drew me to Himself when I was a young man, and my spiritual life was confidently rolling downhill. But the Lord called me into His fellowship and began personally teaching me heavenly truths through constant revelations and through His Word. He placed me in various circumstances and even allowed my falls, so that later He could reveal the danger of this sin and cleanse me from it forever.

During my spiritual growth in the church, I went through all stages of faith, experienced many trials, but never became disappointed in Jesus. I never even had a thought about leaving God's chosen people and living by myself. I saw many situations because of which many people left the church, and sometimes I myself was a conduit of an evil spirit, not understanding what I was doing. But the Holy Spirit always convicted me of my blindness and punished me for such an attitude toward my neighbors. How shameful it is to remember all my mistakes and falls that caused problems and disappointments to other people, but many examples of faithfulness that were revealed to me in Sacred Scripture helped me keep the right course to Heaven and distinguish good from evil.

In the matter of forming faith, all spiritual tools and relationships should be involved, starting from knowing the truth and including my personal choice of the path that leads to a deeper knowledge of the Deity at all levels.

If I am asked what helps me preserve faith in various circumstances, the answer will be simple: "Believe in the Lord your God and you will be established; believe his prophets, and you will succeed" (2 Chron. 20:20).

By believing in the Lord and in the message of His prophets, I enter into the closest relationships with the most powerful Forces in the entire Universe. And considering that our Great Lord unconditionally loves and values each of His sons and daughters, I understand that I cannot escape from this all-encompassing love, and I have to immerse myself in it completely and be the beloved son of the Heavenly King.

It is very difficult for me to imagine how one can live with God, strive for Eternal Life and, at the same time, show unfaithfulness or dream of returning to the world with its temptations and sins.

I understand that having friends among peers in the church contributes to staying in it, but in my personal experience of spiritual formation, I sought truth and Christ, and the Lord added friends of different ages to me, with whom it was interesting to communicate and grow.

My spiritual growth took place in Germany, in a country whose language I did not understand at first and church services gave me little, but I understood that this was God's organization, and I independently studied the foundations of faith from the Bible and books in my native language. This taught me not to depend on people's opinions, but to build my faith on the foundation: "It is written." This principle helps me to this day, even when I learned German and can communicate freely in it.

At some period of my growth, I stood in opposition to the church and began fighting against the lawlessness about which I heard much from disappointed people. But even in this situation the Lord did not leave me, and having led me through the "dark forest," He cleansed me from dangerous garbage and taught me to see not the sins of imperfect people, but the prospects of what one can become under the influence of God's grace.

The life example of four teenagers from the book of the prophet Daniel teaches that any faithfulness to God will be tested and will pass through fire. Also in this story of young people I see that they, before getting to Babylon, were taught spiritual principles, and being in captivity without any rights, they decided to remain faithful to God.

I think they were familiar with the story of faithfulness of their forefather Joseph, when he, being a teenager, fell into Egyptian slavery and decided to be faithful to God's principles and reached amazing heights in his life.

Our teenagers need an inspiring example of other people. Sometimes an insignificant testimony about someone's faithfulness to God unto death switches something in the child's consciousness, and they make a decision to be faithful to God in their life, no matter what.

God teaches parents correct principles in raising their children, He gives them wisdom and the needed light at the right time, writes new knowledge and principles of behavior into children's hearts, and then works with the conscience of growing children based on the knowledge they have received. Such children have more chances for a wonderful life with God than those who were raised by the street and computer games. Good seed will never bring forth bad fruit.

Yes, there are cases when teenagers who received good upbringing at home go into the world, but let this not be a temptation for parents to do nothing and not fight for purity of life. Although with each year the attacks of the enemy of souls become stronger and more dangerous, God's power also grants us more grace for victory over temptations.

Practical application in life of those truths that change life and thinking helps not only to know how good and wise the Lord is, but also to experience this from personal experience. Teenagers who are involved in missionary work or volunteer service for the benefit of other people acquire priceless experience of experiencing how one can bring benefit where you are now.

Sometime the experience of spiritual life and spiritual example of parents becomes the personal experience of their child, and answers to prayers replenish the child's treasury of trusting relationships with the Creator. Interest in biblical truths generates interest in the child's heart, and parents' love reveals God's love to the child. Communicating in a circle of believing and devoted people, the young Christian learns to value and distinguish the pure and holy. And a father's love for his mother and a mother's respect for her father visibly teaches what relationships between people should be like. It is always easier to imitate and follow the example from the life of close people than to invent something good oneself.

A grateful spirit in the family, absence of criticism and gossip, family worship services in a friendly atmosphere - all this forms in the teenager an awareness of belonging to the Heavenly, without which life loses meaning and purpose. Although it is difficult for us to imagine the beauty of Eternity with God, we know for certain that it will be something beautiful and desirable for the soul.

Confidential conversations, a joyful spirit in home communication, acceptance, love and understanding are the natural environment for the beneficial development of any personality, and the presence of such relationships in the church makes this gathering the most desirable place to be present and serve in it.

When we gather to share experiences and revelations received outside the church, and kindle with this the desire to serve in other people, then such meetings will be a life-giving fragrance unto life.

Questions for Reflection

1. Please read Ps. 77(78):4-6; Prov. 1:8-9; 22:6; Rev. 2:10; Deut. 6:6-7; Ps. 118(119):9,11; Dan. 3:17-18; Rom. 8:28; Mal. 4:5-6, in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What was revealed to you in this chapter?

4. What does it mean to be "a conduit of an evil spirit, not understanding what you are doing"? Have you encountered something similar in your life?
5. What does it mean to "write new knowledge and principles of behavior into children's hearts"? How does this happen practically?
6. What helps distinguish the voice of the Holy Spirit among the multitude of opinions and influences in the church?
7. What character qualities make a Christian example truly inspiring for youth?
8. What is more important for forming a teenager's faith: words or personal example of parents? Or both?
9. How does love between spouses influence the formation of children's understanding of God's love?
10. Why is involving teenagers in missionary work so important for their spiritual growth?
11. How to find suitable forms of service for teenagers of different ages and temperaments?
12. How does serving others help strengthen one's own faith?
13. How to combine biblical principles of upbringing with the realities of modern society and the educational system?
14. How do "answers to prayers replenish the treasury of trusting relationships with the Creator"?

Oh, These Smartphones

Smartphones have brought the most powerful and irreversible psychological and social shift to society's life.

The era of "happy childhood" in which many adults were fortunate to live has ended forever in civilized countries. And to return to that time, one can visit distant African tribes where people still live without money and have no access to the internet.

In 2007, the first smartphone from Apple was released. It was very expensive and inaccessible to families with limited budgets. But already in 2010, an Android gadget entered the world arena, which conquered everyone with its low price and immediately gained popularity among young people.

2012 is considered a turning point in the formation of the new smartphone generation, when a large part of teenagers living in Western society acquired personal smartphones and offered the world a new internet culture. It was noticed that it was from this time that teenagers began to communicate less in person, their thinking and perception of reality began to change, and mental illnesses fell upon the world like a tsunami. New fears and anxieties appeared if a teenager was outside the internet access zone, and if they lost their phone, it became a catastrophe. Social networks became the measure of personal self-esteem, a cult of appearance and one's significance in the circle of subscribers, which generated dissatisfaction with oneself and one's appearance in many. Physical activity decreased and problems with posture, obesity and vision deterioration increased. And all this became the beginning of new social diseases of body, spirit and soul.

Smartphones and the internet became a source of obtaining quick pleasure, producing hormonal addiction in teenagers.

And these were still flowers. Now artificial intelligence has entered the world arena - though still an incomprehensible invention, but in many qualities it can already be seen how it

replaces living people and exceeds their intellectual abilities by thousands of times.

The smartphone era covered not only teenagers who have already become adults by our time, but also spread to all generations and layers of society. This has already become that inevitability from which there is nowhere to escape, but something needs to be done about it. And as comical as it sounds, the only place where a person is completely freed from such dependencies and does not defend their rights to use a smartphone is prison with solitary confinement, where there appears much time for reflection, reading and prayer. But is it worth bringing oneself to this?

The most interesting thing is that if you voice all the problems that smartphones and the internet bring, and offer people to give up these benefits for the sake of true spiritual values, society will choose the former.

Working in the construction field, I once heard from one customer the thought that for people now it is important not to have conveniences in housing, but to have internet. If this is not available, then it will be difficult to find a buyer for this real estate. I don't want to talk about this, but for many people the smartphone has become an idol from which they cannot simply take and refuse. Their whole life and the whole meaning of this life is there, and this is already serious.

One can tell many more terrible stories about these means of communication, but our goal is not to frighten you, but to offer an alternative and instill hope.

There is a difference between when your children are now small and still cannot have their own personal smartphone by age, and those who already have teenagers in the family who have their smartphones and live in them. The approach to these two categories of children differs, and therefore wisdom is needed, because prevention is always easier than changing something.

In the ideal case, it is best not to buy a teenager a smartphone until 16-18 years old, explaining this by the fact that there are more valuable things that have special weight and significance

in our family. This should not be an absolute prohibition, but a wise explanation of all the dangers that possessing this gadget brings.

Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms that seduce us from all sides. And when a teenager understands all the danger and logic of parental prohibitions, they see in this a manifestation of their love and calmly endures such restrictions. The power of persuasion of parental words has not been canceled, but these should be wise words, filled with the Holy Spirit and backed by personal example. For convenience and mobile communication, you can give the teenager a button phone. Parents' victory in this matter is worth fighting for and doing everything possible to protect children from this influence as long as possible.

You can also come up with an alternative to the generally accepted pastime on the internet.

If your children are used to living in your love and have trusting relationships with you, then it will be much easier for you to explain everything to them and present these questions in the right light.

If your teenager already has a phone and is dependent on this gadget, then the first rule - do not dare to take this device away. Such an approach will not solve anything, but will only aggravate the situation. Special wisdom and power from above is needed here to act based on your personal situation. Love, friendship, respect, kind words, pleasant communication have not been canceled. The teenager continues to need this.

A young person who has found themselves on the internet is not very eager to engage in ordinary activities. But parents need to involve them in those processes where the presence of a smartphone is not necessary. Hand work, performing socially useful service, trips to nature, hikes, picnics, organizing youth clubs or unions among your friends can become a good alternative in which one can live without the internet.

Also, wisdom can consist in not prohibiting the use of a smartphone, but teaching to use this gadget for preaching the Gospel and for performing some special works, ministries or services that will benefit other people.

You can also show ways and teach a teenager to earn money through the internet, but so that it is legal and does not harm the soul.

Although with smartphone addiction the dopamine system brings satisfaction in a quick way, there are eternal values that no smartphone can replace.

Our world has always been directed against us, so we parents need to become stronger than this world and offer what the world cannot give the child. Become for the teenager someone who will be more interesting to them than their smartphone. This will not happen in an instant, but if you fight for this and strive for this, you will definitely succeed. The problem is not that children spend a lot of time on the internet, but that parents spend little time with children. The enemy uses this feature to occupy parental time with their temptations. If you only pray and do nothing in personal relationships with children, then the probability that something will change will be very small.

It may seem to you that the smartphone has defeated you, but always remember that Jesus has already won in this war and you can and should enter into this victory and defeat the enemy of souls with the power of God's love.

Questions for Reflection

1. Please read 1 Cor. 6:12; 9:27; 15:33; Rom. 6:16; Gal. 5:1; Eccl. 3:1; Prov. 4:23; 22:6; 27:17; Eph. 6:4; Ps. 89(90):12; 1 John 5:21, in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What was revealed to you in this chapter?
4. What role does the smartphone play in your family's life and in your life, reader - helper or master?

5. Are you ready to honestly admit that you yourself are dependent on your device and are not setting the best example for children?
6. Do you see in the smartphone a potential idol that can replace God in your child's heart?
7. Do you understand that the fight for your child's attention is a spiritual battle, not just a generational conflict?
8. What can you replace the time your teenager spends on the internet with?
9. What alternative activities can you offer that will be more interesting than the virtual world?
10. How to create an atmosphere in the house where live communication is valued more than communication in social networks?
11. What spiritual foundations need to be laid in a child so they can resist the temptations of the technological world?
12. How to teach a teenager to use technology for serving God and people, and not just for entertainment?
13. What to do if attempts to limit smartphone use lead to conflicts and protests?
14. Do you believe that God will give you wisdom and strength to solve this task?

"My Dad"

When my daughter was a teenager, I came up with an interesting game that we constantly played. The rules were simple: on Sunday morning, whoever first said "my dad" or "my daughter" got the right to make up the schedule for the entire day, and the loser had to actively participate in all planned activities. The only condition - not to say this phrase over a sleeping person. The rules came into effect only after everyone woke up. Of course, dad always "lost" to his daughter's delight.

My daughter enthusiastically made up a list of activities and trips, and I gladly accepted her plans. During these activities we visited all museums, saw attractions, went to zoos and other places with unique animals. We spent time in various restaurants and talked a lot with each other on different topics. Important condition: we agreed not to take phones and not to communicate with anyone except each other. I also understood the necessity of setting a certain budget, otherwise a teenager's appetites and demands can be unpredictably large. It is very pleasant to remember these hours spent together even now.

In addition to internet life, each of us has needs for love, friendly communication, time devoted personally to us, gifts and touches. When there is abundance of all these factors, the heart tunes to reciprocity, and there is no desire to satisfy these needs in the virtual world.

In our time, offering a teenager to spend a day without a smartphone is equivalent to going into a dense forest without a compass, map, food and water. You will hear many arguments about violating children's rights, about how boring this world is and how uninteresting everything you offer is. Don't be frightened by such statements - this is a normal reaction to which you need to be prepared. You cannot take away a smartphone and try to force good upon your teenager, but you can offer them something better than what they have on their smart phone.

A smartphone for a teenager is their world, their friends and circle of communication, meaning of life and perspective for the future. This is their mirror of the soul in which they see themselves through friends' eyes and their reactions to publications and messages. This is an island of safety and shelter from the external world where the teenager feels protected. This is constant hormonal addiction that the young mind is not yet able to control.

However, parents have a more powerful alternative to all virtual things - their love, personal presence, time, friendly spirit and respectful attitude that they can give to their children. If you think that for a modern teenager a phone means more than human communication, you are mistaken. When one of the parents dies, a teenager does not seek consolation in a phone. Loss of close people at this age is perceived very acutely, and no smartphone will compensate for this loss. Your children love you and need you more than you imagine.

Your offer about spending time together without phones should not sound like a reproach: "Well, how long can you sit on this internet!" It's better to say differently: "I want to spend a special day with you. You and I, and no smartphones. If you agree, then I turn off and put away my phone and am ready to completely immerse myself in communication with you."

It's important to set the time you will spend without phones and give a promise that devices will return after the event. By this you respect the child's choice and do not violate their boundaries. You should have a composed plan of actions, walks, activities and thematic conversations that will be interesting to the teenager. You can go somewhere together or go somewhere, cook something, play something, study something or just communicate on interesting topics. Everything should have respect for the teenager's boundaries and freedom. They should understand that you consider their tastes and offer what they can accept or reject.

Don't be afraid if a teenager refuses such pastime. Don't get indignant, don't get upset, but make it clear that if today this

doesn't work out, your offer remains in force, and in the near future you will try to implement it again.

The presence of humor and sincere friendliness can contribute to success. For example, you can make a box with the inscription: "Hotel for phones. Peace, safety, massage, three meals a day and rest guaranteed." If the teenager is indifferent to your offer, say that you wish not to take away, but to give something better and unusual that they don't even suspect. The offer can sound like an unusual experiment that you want to conduct together with them.

If they agreed to the event but remain silent and show no interest, don't scold or blame them. Make it clear that this was a trial day, and next time it might be more interesting and exciting than today. Don't give up and look for what the teenager is interested in doing.

Always remember: a smartphone is not an enemy, but a means of communication, information and entertainment. But you have something more valuable that this gadget will never give: unconditional love, friendly communication, heart-to-heart conversation, gentle touches and hugs, personal participation in needs, walks and live games.

If you observe that a teenager is dependent on a smartphone, remember: for them life without this gadget means great stress, falling out of life, losing connection with the external world, feeling that they are being controlled and trying to deprive them of the right to personal life. For them silence is the most dangerous state in which they can get lost and not know what to do.

Parents offering life without phones need to be delicate, respectfully make offers, accept excuses and refusals, be on equal terms: if we refuse smartphones, then both.

There can be many ideas for spending time together. If your teenager doesn't like simple communication, come up with something unique and unusual. For example, prepare a dish without a recipe, dramatize some situation as an unusual show, declare a "beauty hunt" and find beautiful things around that

you can admire. Visit childhood places, make a secret gift for relatives together, dress up in unusual images or let the teenager give you an unusual hairstyle and put an unusual outfit on you.

If everything went according to plan, in the evening be sure to discuss the past day and write down all the wonderful experiences that were lived through together. After this, establish a rule: once a month, week or quarter you will conduct similar activities and compose common scenarios. Share success at a common dinner with other family members, telling everyone what an amazing person you discovered in your child.

Quality time spent with a child is an investment in your relationship that will pay off with mutual trust and closeness for many years.

And remember that we are given a prophecy about these relationships, which is recorded in Mal. 4:6: "And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse."

Questions for Reflection

1. Please read Ps. 127(128):3; Eph. 4:2; Gal. 6:9; Heb. 10:24-25; Prov. 13:20; 17:22; 29:15; 1 Cor. 6:12; Rom. 6:16; Matt. 6:21, in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What was revealed to you in this chapter?
4. Do you understand that the fight for your child's attention is a spiritual battle?
5. What emotions do you experience when your teenager is more interested in the phone than in communicating with you?
6. Can you distinguish between healthy and unhealthy use of technology by your child?
7. Do you understand your teenager's fears and anxieties regarding life without a smartphone?
8. What creative ideas for spending time together with your children come to your mind?

9. How to properly motivate a teenager to live communication without resorting to coercion and reproaches?
10. Are you ready to invest time and effort now for the sake of close relationships in the future?
11. What will your child remember about their childhood - a smartphone or time spent with you?
12. Do you know what your child dreams about and what worries them most?
13. What other activities or occupations can be invented to attract a teenager's attention to communication outside the phone?
14. By now changing communication and games with children to sitting on smartphones, are you ready for the fact that your children will ignore you in exactly the same way when they become adults?

Teaching Driving Skills

In communication with a teenager there is a very good activity that all teenagers love, which they dream about and which gives an opportunity to teach a young person lessons of life and responsibility - this is teaching car driving. While the child is small, they see how dad turns the steering wheel, and it will be a big event for them to sit on dad's lap and, taking the steering wheel in their hands, think that they are driving this car themselves, not noticing how dad's hands from below keep the car on the road, and legs regulate the speed. And the older the child becomes, the fewer dad's hands can be observed near the control levers. And sometime comes such a day when dad gives the keys to the car and sits next to them in the passenger seat, offering the teenager to take control of the vehicle themselves and feel all the responsibility for the safety of the car and the safety of passengers and other traffic participants.

In this situation it will be very appropriate to draw parallels between reality and spiritual things.

Driving instruction is not just lessons in acquiring useful skills, but reaching a special level of relationships where parents help a teenager gain maturity, where responsibility for other people's lives is placed on the young person, where they are given the power to be a driver. This is an expression of trust and trusting them with your life and safety. This is a kind of risk that can be very expensive.

It should immediately be noted that such activities for teaching driving skills should not present danger to other drivers and should be in accordance with established laws and traffic rules. It is best to choose deserted places or specially equipped areas for this.

The highway is not space, but a highly organized culture of movement, the rules of which are written with the blood of innocent, inattentive and proud people. Driving instruction should always go together with the theoretical part, where the

teenager should learn traffic rules and know by heart the meanings of all signs, prohibitions and restrictions.

The steering wheel in hands is power, strength and freedom. The driver can drive as they want and wherever they want. This can cause pride and awareness of one's strength. But it should be explained that strength is not in speed and insolence, but in respect for other traffic participants and pedestrians. A wise driver knows when to stop and whom to let pass, even if someone is wrong. Remember that you are not alone on the road, and in another car someone's son or daughter, father or mother may be riding. Learn to see not cars, but people who are riding in them.

When a teenager takes the steering wheel and starts moving, their eyes are focused on the road, and their heart is open for learning. They are attentive to all your words and ready to listen to your lessons and instructions.

A traffic light is like God's answer to prayer. Sometimes it says "no" or "yes," sometimes it asks to wait, and sometimes it doesn't turn on, providing an opportunity to navigate the situation yourself.

The rearview mirror shows the path traveled, but does not call to return there. It shows what is left behind, calling to forget what is behind and reach forward.

Turn signals warn that you are changing the trajectory of movement and teach to care about the safety of others.

Headlights help very well in dark times, illuminating the path and warning oncoming traffic of your approach. They are like God's word, which illuminates spiritual darkness and preserves life from catastrophe.

The gearbox teaches that with a small engine load you can develop high speed if you switch the next speed step in time. Power steering teaches that any small movement of yours will be amplified, and you can do much, but without you and your movements it will do nothing.

The navigator shows the best path from any situation, not arguing, not being indignant when the driver chooses their own path, but always rebuilds the route and calmly, like Jesus, offers the best road.

Oil, antifreeze and fuel cannot be confused or mixed with each other. So truth and falsehood are incompatible. You can make a very interesting comparison when we hand over the steering wheel of our soul to Jesus and trust Him with our life. The car obeys not desires and wants, but control rules, laws of physics, inertia, gravity and movement.

It has been observed that developing automatism and coordination of hands and feet in an adult takes 4-5 times longer than in a teenager. Young people pick up driving skills faster and better remember all the rules they study.

But no matter how parents teach a teenager to drive, they cannot issue them a driver's license and give them the right to legally operate a car. For this there are driving schools with a specific training program and specially equipped vehicles. Therefore, all your driving lessons are good only for building bridges and communications with the teenager, and they are very important for personal closeness.

Not every teenager can afford to pay for training in a driving school, and here parents can set their conditions and make demands or give the future driver the opportunity to earn and pay the required amount themselves. The approach to son and daughter in this matter may differ. As a rule, boys have more opportunities to earn the desired license, and girls may need parental subsidies.

Someday will come the day when your teenager gets a license and asks you for a car to go on business. And here comes the "moment of truth" when they will be completely alone and will drive as they want. Let them understand that this is not just their decision, but an indicator of true character and the first exam on the secret life that only God and other traffic participants see.

The road is like the path of life, traffic rules are like God's law. Signs are reminders and warnings about danger. Road markings are boundaries in relationships that cannot be violated. Traffic lights are silent guardians commanding to stop or continue moving. Cameras and video cameras are the all-seeing eye. Fuel is like the presence of the Holy Spirit, without which you cannot go anywhere. Passengers are neighbors for whom you bear responsibility. The inspector is God's servant, appointed to punish violators. Accidents and breakdowns are life experiences that need to be overcome.

And while nothing has happened, decide for yourself whether you are ready to part with your car forever if an accident happens. How will you behave if you lose the car? Write a note of encouragement: "Don't worry, it's just metal, we'll buy something else, and you and your health are important to me!" - and put it in the vehicle registration or insurance policy.

It would be good if your adult child earned and bought a car themselves. This way they will value and take better care of what they invested their labor and money in.

Driving instruction is a very good opportunity to show a young person your love, your attitude toward the student in exchanging experience, your attitude toward things and your trust. Let each driving lesson become more than just a skill lesson. Let this be a time when the teenager's heart opens for important conversations, when they see that they are trusted, and learn to be responsible not from fear, but from love.

Questions for Reflection

1. Please read Jer. 10:23; Prov. 3:5-6; 4:18; 15:22; Ps. 36(37):5; 118(119):105; Isa. 30:21; John 14:6; Deut. 30:16; Phil. 2:4; Rom. 13:1-5; 15:2, in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What was revealed to you in this chapter?
4. What fears prevent giving the teenager more responsibility and teaching them useful driving skills?
5. Does my teenager understand that spiritual principles are as important as traffic rules?

6. Can you explain complex life principles through simple, understandable examples?
7. Are you ready to learn patience in the process of teaching a teenager?
8. What character qualities do you want to develop in your teenager through driving instruction?
9. How to show a teenager that people are more important than things?
10. Are you preparing the teenager for independent life or creating dependence on yourself?
11. Does the teenager learn by observing my behavior and attitude toward other people while I'm driving?
12. Do you show the teenager how to ask forgiveness for mistakes and bear responsibility for violations?
13. What are the most important life lessons that can be drawn from the process of learning to drive?
14. How can we turn ordinary driving instruction moments into opportunities for spiritual growth?

Freedom

Raising a child, parental influence on a teenager, and further relationships between parents and grown-up children differ from one another, but at the same time do not remove from father and mother their right to be parents.

It is important to understand that the influence of the older generation on their children does not end at any age - it transforms from one format of relationships to another.

Until age 3, parents are nannies; at 6 they are commanders; at 10 - teachers; at 14 - mentors; at 17 - wise companions; at 20 - good friends; and after 25 - spiritual guides and a support group.

To correctly understand what role parents should play in their children's lives and when their authority to be parents ends, it is worth taking God as an example and His relationship with His children and disciples.

We read in Isaiah 46:3-4: "Listen to me, house of Jacob, and all the remnant of the house of Israel, you whom I have upheld since you were conceived, and have carried since your birth. Even to your old age and gray hairs I am he, I am he who will sustain you. I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain and rescue you."

When the time came for Jesus to part with His disciples, He gave them this comfort: "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you" (John 14:18).

Parents prepare their teenager for independent life, they teach that the time will come when children will have to leave their father's house forever to arrange their lives independently of others. But when this time of parting comes in connection with the teenager's move to a new place of study or to their new housing at their place of work, or when a new family is created, this does not mean that the son or daughter is now completely free and can do whatever they want. This means that the children have become more independent, but have not stopped

needing spiritual guidance and friendly support from their parents.

Sometime it will be necessary to tell the teenager that they are already an adult and can live as they want, choose their life path independently and bear responsibility for their choice. In fact, teenagers eagerly await the day when they will finally gain complete freedom, when they can decide for themselves how to live and what to believe, but they do not want to be abandoned and become "orphans" with living parents.

To release a teenager to freedom in the correct understanding of this meaning means to change the format of your influence, but always be nearby to lend a shoulder or show the best way out of a difficult situation.

Do not mask your indifference and apathy under respect for freedom. It is important to understand that an independent teenager does not yet have life experience, their psyche is not yet formed, and their heart continues to need unconditional love and wise guidance. Their brain is not yet accustomed to coping with many tasks and the volume of all kinds of decisions, and their psyche needs relief. Freedom without boundaries becomes permissiveness, and a young person does not see many dangers of such a state. And if they do not have firm spiritual guidelines, then the enemy of souls will certainly use this situation to cause harm.

Wise shipbuilders work for many years not to release a finished ship onto underwater reefs and rocks and then watch as the result of their painstaking labor sinks, but so that the product of their creativity can meet any bad weather and storm with dignity and faith, exposing their sides to the blows of waves and reaching the intended goal without any internal damage.

When any of us is born into this world, the first thing doctors do is cut the umbilical cord, but then they give the baby into the mother's hands.

In a teenager's life, you should not focus on their age and think that at 18 they should start independent life outside their father's house. Some teenager may already be independent and

organized at 15, while someone may still be a child at 20, afraid to make their choice without parental consent.

"Cutting the umbilical cord" in adolescence needs to be done wisely and correctly.

For example: you don't give money, but teach them to earn it; you don't monitor, but show interest and trust; you don't impose your opinion or decision, but reason and are open to dialogue; you don't force them to read spiritual things, but share what touched you; you give freedom to make independent decisions, but continue to pray for your children.

The goal of parents is not to control the maturing personality, but to maintain unconditional love and influence.

Instead of the phrase: "Decide for yourself, you're already an adult!" - it's better to say: "How do you see the solution to this issue? If it will be difficult for you to figure it out yourself, then I'm nearby to support you."

Remember the behavior of the loving father from the parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15). He did not condemn, but waited. He did not take revenge, but accepted. He did not get angry, but rejoiced at the return. He did not stop being a loving father when his love was being tested, but believed that something would change and the son would learn something. He did not run after the son who decided to leave, but waited with love and accepted him without reproaches, but with joy.

The real freedom that parents should give their teenager is not external, but internal. It is born when the teenager understands that they are loved, that they are dear and needed, that freedom is not the absence of boundaries, but the transfer of responsibility, light and love and respect for their choice.

A free son or daughter should not lose sight of you, but understand that you are nearby, that you are available and interested in their success, and can empathize with their difficulties and trials. That in your face they have real friends who will understand, not condemn, and will always come to help if needed.

If your teenager, having received freedom, declares that they don't need God or aren't interested in church, then most likely they are just confused and need to be convinced otherwise. Find out the reason for such a decision and don't say: "Live as you want!"

It may seem to you that your son is completely grown up, and your daughter is already independent and can live as she wants. But don't rush to such conclusions, don't give them to this world without a fight. There are many ways to convince them otherwise, but even if this doesn't work out, let them know that you continue to love them and have a firm position. Become a spiritual guide for them, and this will have the proper influence on their consciousness and further choice. Let your life become that navigator that doesn't scold, but rebuilds the route and offers the best path, respecting their choice.

Don't make mistakes by giving freedom too early and making children "orphans," or too late, fearing to lose influence on the teenager's life and choice.

Remember: freedom is not a path away from parents, but a path to personal responsibility. "You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh..." (Gal. 5:13).

A teenager needs experienced people not to control them when they make mistakes or stand at crossroads, but who will be nearby to help and support during difficult periods.

Be an eagle that drops chicks from a cliff, but always flies nearby, extending its wings, not wanting them to crash, but to teach them to use their wings and fly through life without fear.

You are now not the captain of the ship, but a lighthouse in the raging sea.

Questions for Reflection

1. Please read 2 Cor. 3:17; John 8:36; 1 Cor. 10:23; 1 Pet. 2:16; Eccl. 11:9; Rom. 14:12; Ps. 26(27):10; 126(127):1; Prov. 17:17; Luke 15:20, in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?

3. What was revealed to you in this chapter?
4. What is freedom?
5. Why does freedom without boundaries turn into permissiveness or anarchy?
6. What is the difference between freedom from parents and freedom to responsibility?
7. How to help a teenager see that true freedom is not the absence of control, but the presence of wisdom?
8. How to remain a mentor for an adult son or daughter without intruding into their personal space?
9. Why is it important to "release" a teenager but not abandon them?
10. What mistakes do parents make by giving freedom too early or too late?
11. What lesson does the behavior of the father in the parable of the prodigal son give us?
12. Why did Jesus say: "I will not leave you as orphans" and how does this relate to parents?
13. What can be a dangerous consequence if a teenager receives freedom without guidelines?
14. How to make sure that a child, even after leaving home, always feels your love, availability and participation?

"...Will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children..."

In the book of the prophet Malachi we read these verses: "See, I will send the prophet Elijah to you before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes. He will turn the hearts of the parents to their children, and the hearts of the children to their parents; or else I will come and strike the land with total destruction" (Mal. 4:5-6). The words of this prophecy relate to the last time, and they will certainly be fulfilled. And, accordingly, several questions arise:

When will this time come? Who will be the prophet Elijah? What fathers and children are being discussed? How does this relate to us?

It is difficult to give unambiguous answers to all this, as more complex questions will arise. But it is clear that some kind of relationships should occur between parents and children that will bring them closer. And these relationships will be initiated by the one whom Sacred Scripture calls the prophet Elijah.

We read in the Gospel that this prophecy already had its first fulfillment in the time of Jesus. And the Lord Himself confirmed this by calling John the Baptist the prophet Elijah. We read in Matt. 17:10-13: "The disciples asked him, 'Why then do the teachers of the law say that Elijah must come first?' Jesus replied, 'To be sure, Elijah comes and will restore all things. But I tell you, Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but have done to him everything they wished. In the same way the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands.' Then the disciples understood that he was talking to them about John the Baptist."

I want to note the phrase: "The prophet came, and they did not recognize him." If not for Jesus's words, then perhaps no one would consider John the prophet Elijah even now.

From Christ's words one can assume that in our days few will recognize the true prophet whom the Bible calls Elijah, since

we are not given detailed descriptions of his activity, but only the Holy Spirit will be able to indicate that this is the one of whom the Bible speaks.

The spirit of the prophet Elijah will turn the hearts of fathers to children, and after this - the hearts of children to their fathers. It is important to understand this sequence and think about at what age of children this turning should occur. It is customary to consider and call children children until the teenage period. But in fact, my children always remain children for me at any age. And if we consider children's attachment to parents, then the hearts of children up to 12-13 years old are strongly attached to their parents, and parents have no problems with their younger generation.

But an interesting age comes when children stop being children and their bodies begin to transform, their worldview begins to change, and they themselves begin to mature. It is at this time that many parents, not knowing how to behave and relate to their teenager, lose control over maturing personalities and even manage to spoil relationships.

Offering various people information and books on raising children for God, I noticed a common need: many parents who have a teenager in their family asked for books about raising and influencing teenagers. And if people ask for something useful, then they should be given it.

The heart of an offended or humiliated father will not by itself strive toward that teenager who is in open opposition to parental authority and asks: "And what will you do to me?" Not knowing how to behave in such a situation and why this happens everywhere provokes much of what spoils relationships, destroys love and brings discord to families.

The internet and all kinds of information for any taste have made children unnecessary, and their upbringing optional. But God has not forgotten about His creation, and He desires to turn the hearts of fathers to children, and the hearts of children to their fathers. And this happens in the lives of those who study the principles of love for a teenager, who understand how

the Heavenly Father relates to us, who do not wish to give the enemy of souls even a millimeter of their territory.

Who is the prophet Elijah in our time? I think I will not be mistaken if I name God's messenger Ellen White, who through her dedication made a huge contribution to God's work and left behind a huge spiritual legacy in the form of letters, books and various articles on spiritual topics. Her works also included books on raising children and teenagers.

And although this woman is no longer alive, her works continue to perform great work and fulfill God's prophecy about the last days.

Any information through modern researchers that turns parents' hearts to children is also a fulfillment of the prophecy written at the end of the book of Malachi.

The carnal heart will not want any turning, and the hearts of the sons of men who are in opposition to fathers are unlikely to seek ways to reconciliation. What can heal destroyed relationships and build the correct model of behavior between generations? Only God's love is capable of giving people what they have lost, what has cooled in them due to the multiplication of lawlessness. Without revelation from above and without knowledge of God's character, people can invent anything. But God's plan is to reveal God's image to man, and then restore this image in the life of everyone who desires and thirsts.

God also does not wish to turn the hearts of fathers to children and children to fathers in evil, so that they unite in coalitions and fight against Him.

Every father and every mother who understand that their children are not enemies, but a heritage from the Lord, that these are people who need to be correctly understood and unconditionally loved, and will begin to ask for this love from God, can become Elijah. Every parent can, based on the promise from the book of the prophet Malachi, ask for the spirit of Elijah for themselves and, receiving what is requested, do what the Lord expects: acknowledging their mistakes, building

dialogue, showing interest in the teenager's world and life, learning the basics of unconditional love.

Teenagers need the spirit of Elijah manifested through their parents' attitude, and they will gladly fulfill the second part of the prophecy about themselves: "...and will turn the hearts of children to their fathers." God does not destroy families and relationships, but creates them, restores ruins, teaches all members to be loving and friendly.

God is love, and the spirit of Elijah is a practical manifestation of this love. When fathers ask God for love for their children, then God's Word comes alive in their lives and begins to fulfill what it was spoken for.

For God there is no greater insult than when His representatives, bearing His name, manifest another spirit and create an image of another god, and instead of love sow seeds of discord and enmity.

There is no need to wait for the prophet Elijah in the distant future - one needs to become him today, and the Lord will help correct all mistakes, teach to love rejected children, will begin to answer all prayers for one's teenagers and show how to restore what was destroyed many years ago.

Even if your children are already adults and have their own children, then Malachi's prophecy will also work for them if you allow God to endow you with the spirit of Elijah.

Of course, it would not be superfluous to study the life of the prophet Elijah himself, John the Baptist and the advice of those through whom the Lord teaches to love one's teenager and build bridges in these relationships.

Also, all fathers should understand that they are also someone's children and can become initiators of the fulfillment of prophecy toward their own parents, if something was destroyed in these relationships.

Questions for Reflection

1. Please read Luke 1:17; 1 Kings 18:21; Ps. 126(127):3; Prov. 17:6; 29:15; Jer. 31:3; Col. 3:21; Isa. 49:15; Matt. 7:11; Hos. 11:4; Eph. 4:32; Joel 2:28, in light of this lesson.
2. What other verses from the Bible came to your mind?
3. What was revealed to you in this book?
4. What does the phrase "spirit of Elijah" mean in the context of family relationships?
5. Why does the prophecy first speak of turning the hearts of fathers to children, and then children to fathers?
6. Can Malachi's prophecy be fulfilled repeatedly in history, and if so, how?
7. What modern factors most destroy relationships between generations?
8. Why do many parents lose connection with children precisely during the teenage years?
9. Why does the heart of an "offended father" not naturally strive toward the child?
10. Why is unconditional love so important precisely during the teenage years?
11. Is it possible to restore relationships with already adult children, and how to do this?
12. What to do if the initiative of reconciliation does not meet a response?
13. How to avoid repeating former mistakes in restored relationships?
14. What specifically can you do today to "turn your heart" to children?
15. How has this book changed your understanding of the parental role and family relationships?